ETCH

magazine

Volume 3, No. 1

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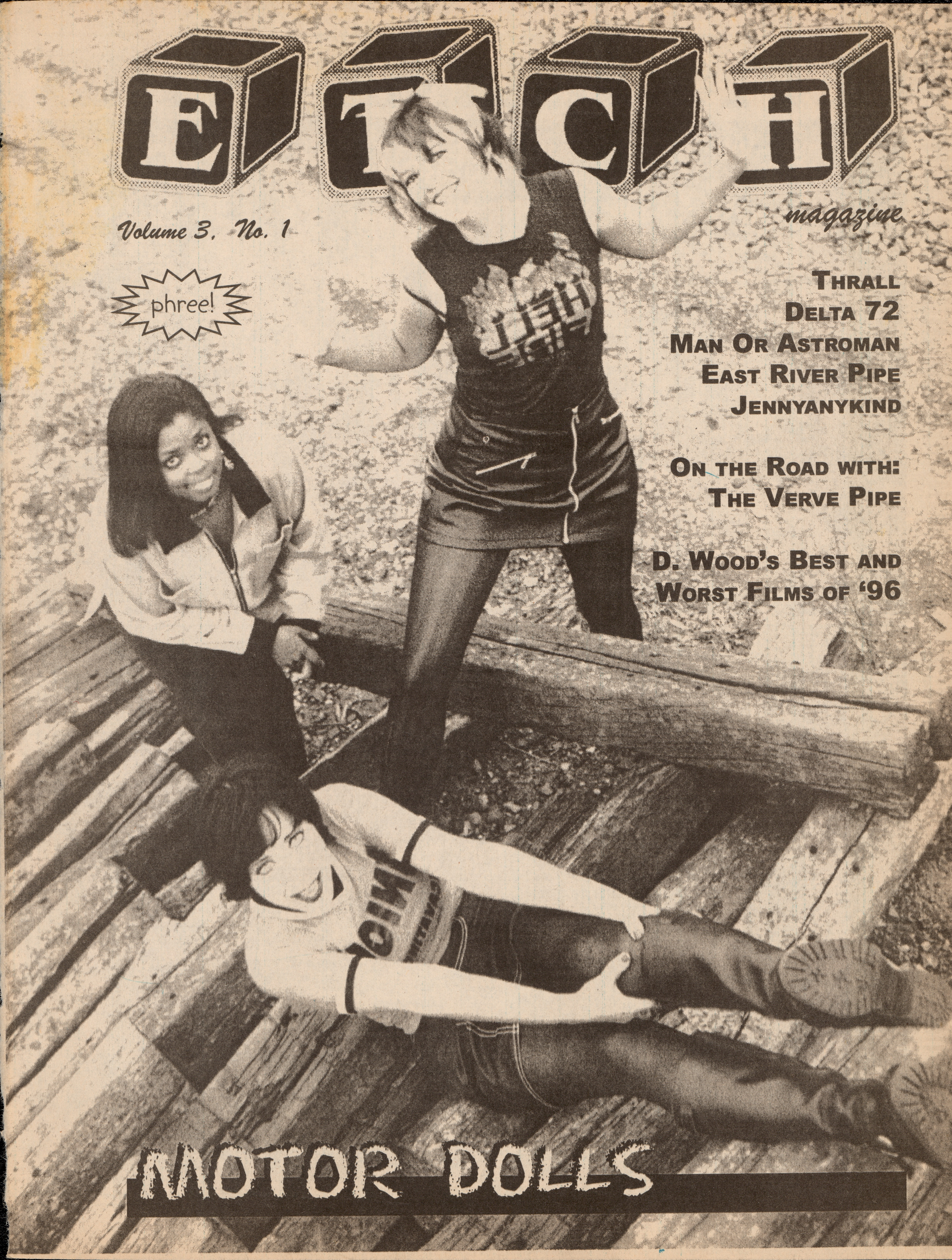


THRALL

DELTA 72

MAN OR ASTROMAN

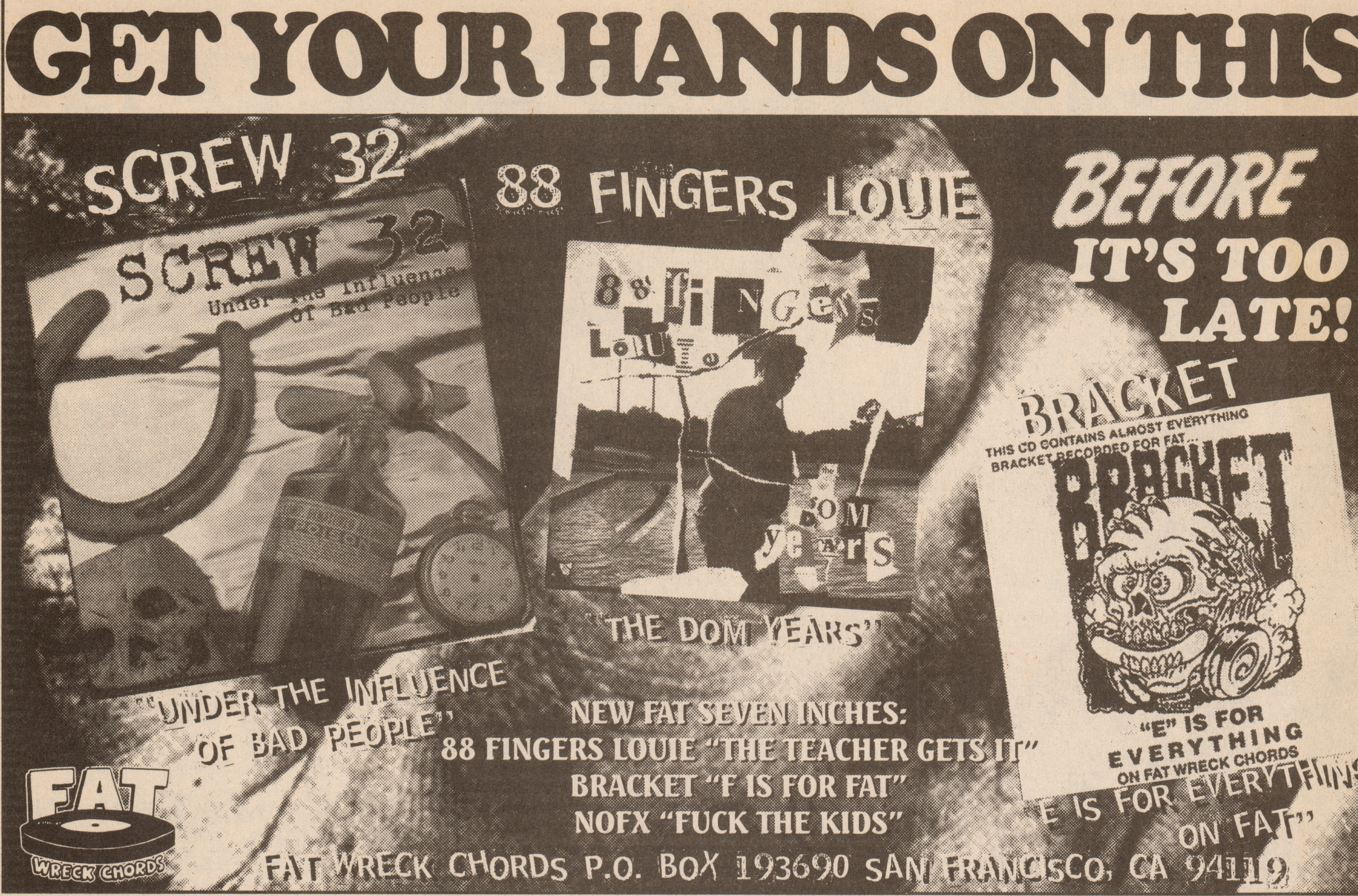
EAST RIVER PIPE

JENNYANYKIND

ON THE ROAD WITH:
THE VERVE PIPE

D. WOOD'S BEST AND
WORST FILMS OF '96

MOTOR DOLLS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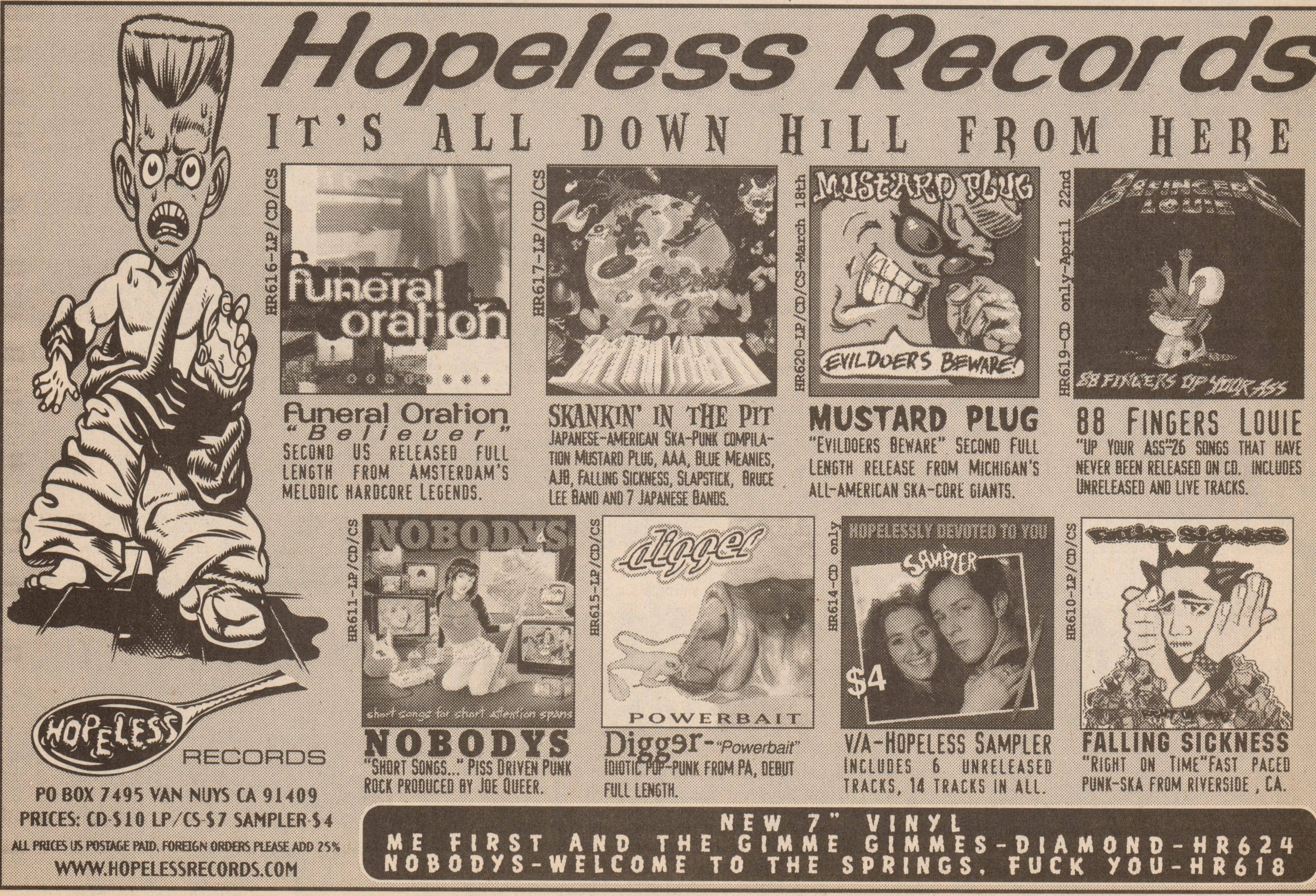
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shows

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films

TRIP
on the road with the verve pipe

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'zines + stuff

NEWS
and gossip?

BAND
listings -- dates -- etc.

On the cover: THE MOTORDOLLS
Layout: Carl Hoch / Photo: Ewolf

editor's rant

We live in a society dominated by a perverse desire for the sensational. A nation so engrossed in the trivial that it borders on the absurd. Not to take anything away from the tragedy of the murders of Ron Goldman and Nicole Brown Simpson, but the night the "guilty" verdict (not the correct legalese but essentially the same) came in, news directors across the country were caught in a dilemma of whether to broadcast the court proceedings or President Clinton's State of the Union speech (traditionally a yawner). Cooler heads prevailed and the major networks and CNN ran the speech, but the fact that there were discussions as to what to cover is, in many ways, alarming. Does a verdict of a civil trial, regardless if it involves a celebrity or not, really mean more, historically or practically, than a President's speech to Congress and the American people? What is more important? We've become enthralled with titillation - the fact that Simpson was a celeb and the two people he murdered were, by all standards, attractive bear this out. Tabloids (and even some "reputable" news agencies) showed photos of Ms. Brown Simpson in a less than flattering light, yet beat their breasts in indignation when Simpson was acquitted. In news reports, Goldman went from waiter to friend to lover. Magazines would portray Brown Simpson as a drug using slut on one page and extol her virtues as a mother on the next. Sex, violence, celebrity. Author Dominick Dunne told PBS's Charlie Rose the night the verdict in the civil trial was announced, that Simpson "will be with us forever." He's more famous now than at any point before the murders. Now, whenever he stubs his toe, curses at a golfing buddy or gets a flu shot, the media will cover it like the Second Coming. They'll ask friends and family members for their reactions, call on the victims' families for their spin and hire "experts" to analyze the implications. Hiding behind their "cloaks of respectability" bloodsuckers like Larry King and Geraldo Rivera will continue to get rich feeding off this tragedy, while looking for new horror stories to give us as "hard news." Look at how they and others in the media have made folk heroes out of ghouls like John Wayne Gacy, Ted Bundy and Charles Manson. Are we, as a society, really so shallow that we are turned on by this? Do crimes like Simpson's or the Menendez Brothers truly have an impact on our lives? Two people were brutally murdered. Two young children, now motherless, are in the custody of the man who has been deemed unanimously liable for their mother's murder by a preponderance of the evidence by 12 of his peers. Another family has lost a son and brother, yet we lap up it up like mother's milk. But what truly angers me, is that I, too, have been sucked into this vortex, never to regain time lost when I should have been doing something constructive that would have been beneficial to my community. Like many others I am guilty of that crime...NZ.

ETCH magazine

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HELP IF YOU CAN!

I have a request of all of you that I am writing about. A very good friend of mine is dying of cancer. His blood type is O- thats O negative and is the rarest form of blood. He desperately needs this blood to continue his life which I cherish a great deal. If anyone has this blood type and is willing to donate please contact me via e-mail or otherwise and I will be more than ecstatic to speak with you as to further details. If you do not have this blood type I would greatly appreciate this message being forwarded to anyone you know. Thank you gentle ones.

Sincerely,
Darren Melameth
dmelamet@post.smu.edu

I've just finished reading the story "Trip" by Bat Guano (*Stuck in Ludington, Full of Angst*), that started in Vol. II, No. 1 issue and concluded in the next. A friend was kind enough to drop the issues off after recognizing me in the story as one of the local characters. I appreciate the coverage, only wish you could have used my name and address! (You know, the old bit, don't care what you print, just so you spell the name right.) I understand the situation, no problem there.

I'm the guy described as the proprietor of the "Two-story brick warehouse built in the nineteenth century", that was being used as storage for my father's estate. I remember you guys well, hope you're not offended by my opinion of you: you seemed to be pretty well-mannered and I'll welcome you back anytime! If everyone that perused the mess here was as easy to talk to as you were, my life'd be a lot easier.

I would like to set a couple facts straight, though. As far as my building, which hopefully will become the new quarters for my bicycle shop if I can ever find the money to get the necessary repairs finished up, it was never a warehouse. It started as a cigar factory, and as the name above the front of the building set in brick states, was built in 1910. Later, it became a retail store, and acquired the huge front windows. Hardly a warehouse setup. One of the monster windows was destroyed in the seventies and replaced with several smaller ones, but it still is a retail storefront.

What really got me laughing, however, was that what you guys saw of my late father's collections overwhelmed you... I guess I didn't explain clearly enough.. You were only looking at a COUPLE PERCENT of what he left behind... this was just the minor leftovers... only a few hundred thousand items! Dad died in a fire in his big old Victorian, and we had to empty the place so it could be repaired. After throwing away half a dozen of those semi-truck size dumpsters filled with what had no antique, monetary, or historical value, I had to rent 7,500 square feet just to store what was kept till we started the estate sale the next year. Mind you, that was just the house, and later on when the place sold, we had to empty the carriage house and the two garages!

I'm sure my father wasn't the greatest packrat of all time, but he surely must easily have been close to second place. The family library was about 12,000 books, and uncountable magazines, newspapers, etc.. Over half had to be thrown away after the fire. Later I filled another couple dumpsters with books that weren't of enough value to warrant keeping them, and built all those massive bookshelves upstairs here to sort them into. I only kept about 4,000 total. I certainly have no idea how many thousands of magazines there were to begin with, but those shelves of them you saw here were only a teeny drop in the bucket.

(Grinning)
Guys, you just get overwhelmed too easily!

As far as the rest of the article goes, a lot of it I find quite accurate. Attitudes and culture certainly do change a lot when you get up here. The towns of this size inland make this look like a sophisticated metropolis, however. If you ever want to really go through total culture shock, try places like Irons, Tustin, Leroy, Bitely, and so on, off 131 and M-37... they may not have quite the bar / population ration we have here. Never checked that. But you'd swear you were in the deep South at times. They even talk with a Southern accent! At least here on the coast, it's like being in a little more civilized place.

Oh, as far as your awe of all the 8-tracks scattered around here... I agree! Mostly, though, it's these tightwads that own the older, more established local businesses. I don't know if you guys noticed it, but there was a state of the art digital sound system, cd, DAT, here in this old dump. Maybe it wasn't playing when you were here. There (fortunately) are no local laws outlawing good sound systems, just a tradition of Who cares? One of the local banks just recently got rid of its 5-tape 8-track changer and went to CD sound, in fact.

Well, I'll quit blathering, and get this into the email tonite (Yup, some of us up here even know what that is)(a couple of us even know how to use it!). I'd send it from here at the shop right now, but something's wrong with my Netscape again, and I haven't got a spare copy on hand down here.

BTW, after my friend dropped your rag off to me, I checked out your net site. Very well done, had a lot of fun there. I be back!

Lee Peters
(Proprietor of the weird old dump/bicycle shop in the story)
420 S. James St.
Ludington, MI 49431
616-845-1326
Email: lpeters@voyager.net

20 December 1996

Dear Mr. Zebrowski,

Your editorial in the Vol. 2 No. 5 issue was great! I have one point to add. Sometime in the last few years the entertainment industry overtook the weapons manufacturers to become this country's largest exporters. CDs, movies, video games, and Green Day vinyl outsell M-16s and cluster bombs around the globe today. This is why every second punk band in the country gets a major record deal. With this kind of money circulating thru the entertainment business it's more surprising to find a band that hasn't been pushed to platinum.

Sincerely,
Jeff Fudesco
500 N. Foster Ave.
Lansing, MI 48912

Dear ETCH,
Everytime I pick up a new issue of your mag I hope to see reviews of Grand Rapids bands that are cool -- doesn't anyone ever come here?

9-Volt Tongue (this issue yeah!)*
The Blue Monkey Room
Zoomorph
The Veronica Speedwell
Shinola

These are not the typical G.R. college crap bands, you should make it up here more often.

I was very sad to find no reviews for Barkmarket Nov. 1 -- great show!!! and especially Brainiac on Devil's Night. Someone from your mag was there to review the show, but it was not mentioned in this month's issue* (**Vol. 2 - No.. 5, ed.*) -- what's up? Here are some shows you won't want to miss... (*The shows she mentioned took place before we went to press with this issue, ed.*)

Need someone to review shows that you can't make it to? I work at The Reptile House and my significant other books 90% of the bands that come thru this area. Either of us would be happy to give you our input.

Sue Sweet
519 North St.
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

okay buddies, i do believe that i picked up your zine in a coffeeshop in royal oak a while ago (did you have an issue with interviews with hayden and kidrock?). well if it was your zine that i picked up, i must let you know that you embarassed me incredibly. the cover of your zine was a black grey, and while i sat in this coffeeshop, drinking my coffee, reading your zine, i just happened to let the cover of it brush past my face. believe me i felt really dumb when my friend came out of the bathroom and screamed, "you have a moustache!!". so i washed it off but everyone in the damn cofeeshop had heard her scream so they all saw my new look (if you coould call it that). so i oughtta let you know, if that was your zine (and i do believe that it was), dont make the cover come off on your face!!!!!! (it could turn into an embarasing experience) ---becca mjmvw@cybersol.com

Becca,
Would it help if I told you that our ink hasn't been animal-tested and that it's hypo-allergenic? ed.

Dear Etchers,

My son Josh, who is junioring over at Okemos High School, delivered a copy of your magazine to me during his recent Christmas visit. I enjoyed it a great deal, especially the coverage of the Volebeats, who have quickly become one of my favorite Detroit bands. The Voles have recently contributed a track to a compilation commemorating the songs of Cincinnati's Midwestern Hayride, which should see the light of day in the next couple of months (the disc is being co-released by Cincinnati's Shake It Records, and Chicago's Bloodshot Records). It is a tremendous tribute, and I'll try to have one sent your way (Shake It proprietor Darren Blase is a friend and neighbor and owes me favors left over from the Reagan administration).

On a related note, I would like to offer this slight return to Matt Payok's review of the new Lazy disc: the Ohio place that brought you GBV, Brainiac, and various Kim Dealers is Dayton, while Lazy hails from the Ohio place that brought you Afghan Whigs, Throneberry, and the Isley Brothers (the aforementioned Cincinnati). And while we're on the subject, The Lazy Music Group is actually the band's sophomore effort for Roadrunner, their debut being 1994's *Some Assembly Required.*

That's it for now. I'll be looking for Etch on my frequent visits to Lansing, so keep tossing them around. There is no more important work on the planet than telling people about great music.

Sincerely,

Brian Baker
P.O. Box 23309
Cincinnati, OH 45223-0309
bkb949@optimum.com

Etch,

Hey how goes it? My name is Joby Purucker, I have been reading Etch ever since I laid my eyes upon an issue in the Rock Cafe here in Battle Creek. I did not until tonight realize that you guys had a website so I had to come give it a look! Anyway I have a band down here in B.C. called "Area 51" and I was wondering what I have to do to get you guys to come review 1 of our shows?

I, am also gonna throw a link to this page on my website http://www.geocities.com/SunsetStrip/9633 You Guys are doing a great job. There is no other publication around that gives info on bands in Michigan (that I would listen to) like you. So...keep up the good work and let me know how I can get you guys down here !!!!

later
Joby Purucker

Hey!
I saw your video show on cable access here in Ann Arbor earlier tonight and thought I'd let you know it's pretty darn cool. Thats all.

The Rambler

That's right gang, there is indeed an **ETCH** *television show now. If you'd like it on your cable system contact us and we'll fill you in on the details.*

Hey Norm!
Just thought I'd drop you a line saying keep up the great shows. Etch has been bringing some great bands to the area and many friends and I are thankful for your saving of our ears from that common college grunge shit. The show on TV is great as well. Only you can mix together the eminating sounds of NOFX and local bands like MOG. Thanks for booking us too. Basically, I just wanna say (since I forgot at the New Year's Show) Happy Belated Birthday Man!!!! Take care man and keep up the rockin' shows, WADE of The Deans.

That's right gang, **ETCH** *does indeed book shows here in Lansing, MI. We've got a gig every Friday and Saturday night at* **Mac's Bar** *(2700 East Michigan Avenue - Lansing). Any bands interested should call Norm.*

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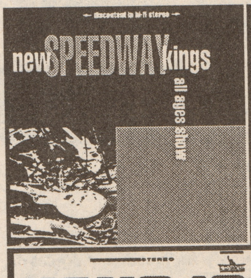
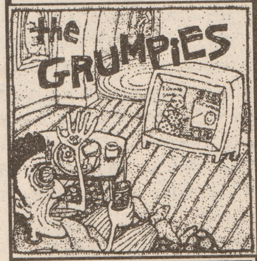
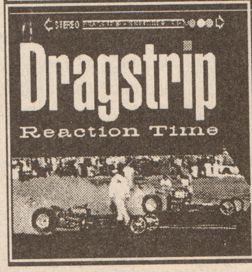


HANG 10
VARIOUS ARTISTS
VOLUME ONE





→ New Speedway Kings are a punk band from San Francisco, with a six song CD. ($7) → "Hang 10" is a 10 band compilation 10 inch. It offers surf related music from Helen Love, Tornadoes, Fun Fun Attitude, Boyz Next Door, Woodies, Queers, Beatnik Termites, McRackins, Cub, Mark Brodie & the Beaver Patrol. ($7) → The Grumpies are Amy, Vince and Jayson. They're from Mississippi. They play four fast songs on their debut single. They will play in your house! ($3.50) → From Bloomington, Indiana, it's 13 cool hot rod and surf instrumentals on the debut CD from Dragstrip. ($9)

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SHREDDER Records

BLAB

JENNYANYKIND

The Truth Is Never Listened To

Bryan Ramirez

When I first heard ***Jennyanykind's*** *third release,* ***Mythic****, on* ***No. 6 Records****, I concluded that this band is in a true league of its own, scene-wise. Sounds pretty lonely. Yet no one can deny great music under any circumstances. Music is the truest limitless method of communication and expression there is, and if that's all you want to focus on, without worrying about money, popularity and promotional stunts, then go for it. In the long run you save your self-respect and limit expectations. This is the attitude I got from singer / guitarist / songwriter* ***Michael Holland****. I'm sure there are a few cynics that'll gladly pin an egotist label on someone who practically ignores any form of criticism of his work, or is truly justified in his ethic. Holland is admirably focused, and that is indisputable, especially if he admits mistakes and takes them as a learning experience. It's what you call being well-shaped in thought. So my point is that a musician can simply exist with utmost honesty and create great music at their own pace.* ***Jennyanykind*** *have done this in a full circle format: they began as independent, got signed to Elektra, hated the pace (or lack thereof), then made a mutual agreement to split after only one album, becoming independent once again. Many artists would throw in the towel. I sure as hell wouldn't expect that from* ***Jennyanykind****; I really think they're good enough as a band to just continue on a self-supportive level.*

Here's a quick rundown on ***Jennyanykind****: four available releases, with Holland joined by his brother* ***Mark*** *on drums and* ***Tom Royal*** *on bass. Each release has a distinctively different approach; they jump from Barrett-era Pink Floyd to waltz beats to gospel to blues to all-out fuzz and beyond. in short, this band is one of the best in the country, and* ***Mythic*** *reigns as one of the decade's best releases. It took a year to track this band down, and finally I have a sworn testament from Michael Holland.*

Since I don't know a single thing about your band, how about if you give us a little history?

We've been together since 1991, and ***Revelater*** is our fourth release Basically, we're just a bunch of guys that lived in the area and we had gotten together...after I went to Clemson University I moved here to play music, met Tom and then my brother moved up here...we never played around here that much because...even now we're just starting to draw crowds (in Chapel Hill). So, up from the start we were basically a road band, just a bunch of bum musicians who travel around and play. But, we were really close to people and luckily it was one of those things that coincidence and fate or God that kept it together and we're really lucky. But, we've never had any financial or commercial success, although we have made the music that we like and we've done our albums the way we wanted to.

Are you pretty tight with the scene in Chapel Hill?

No...It seems like the scene around here is not driven by musical desires, it's more of cliques and what's hip and what's cool. It's like a fashion-oriented type thing...you know...a hipster type thing. But y'know, we're not about that. We're just musicians because "it" chose us. We didn't choose to...just say 'Hey, let's start a band.' We're just musicians.

Did you have any other independent releases prior to these four?

Yeah, I put out a 7-inch. Two songs from ***ETC...*** (their first full-length) "Windchimes / Long" are on the 7-inch. That was the first thing I put out, in 1991. I had a car and I sold it to get the money to make ***ETC...*** We made it for a thousand bucks. Shimmy Disc was gonna put it out, but they were trying to screw us over. Typical...we just didn't know any better. When we got up there (NYC), they were trying to screw with us, so we just said 'Fuck you!' Luckily, this guy named **Terry Tolkin,** who was A&R over at Elektra Records, owned this label No. 6, which was just a hobby to him. So he heard the tape and he wanted to put it out; he was pretty straight up so we went to him. One of our managers, who also works for Elektra, became label manager for No. 6, so we put out an EP after that: ***Blues of the Afflicted***, then ***Mythic*** and jumped to Elektra. We got signed to Elektra during a signing spree but we didn't get much money. They basically gave us money to make the record.

So is it pretty cool being on a bigger label?

No, it sucks right now.

Really. What sucks about it?

Well, Terry, our A&R guy, isn't there anymore - that was right before the record came out. They have a good publicity department and the potential is there, but we're small fish in a big pond and all the money is being devoted to proven acts...I don't know if they're the right label for us or not. We get better distribution which is pretty good. But, there's no money behind us so we have to stay on the road.

The thing that blows me away about *Revelater* is the spiritual content. Are you spiritual or religious?

I would say more spiritual. I think religion is an ugly term, and is a bad way of controlling life...In that sense it can be confining because in this day of words, words are taken so literally and seriously. It's just a word - and how can you be confined by a word? ***Revelater*** is just a life record. I wouldn't say it was spiritual or religious, I think that one of the things ***Revelater*** says is why can't a man or woman have faith, faith in anything? And...without fear it's being pigeonholed into it (religion) or stereotyped even in something that is broad as someone's faith or spirituality. I mean, I'm not afraid to do that, y'know. Why does (faith) have to be stereotyped into (any religion)?

(I ranted on about Soul-Junk and their Christian ways, then admitted my theory about Holland possibly being a born-again figure.)

Revelater is a renewed sense of what truth is, in life. I mean, have you ever heard that saying, 'God lies in detail'? It's just the way of God. I don't think it's really being born-again, because ***Revelater*** is more...a struggle to understand the nature of God or the nature of yourself. That's what it really comes down to. And in the end there really is an acceptance of love or humanity or God.

Do you think you found the truth in all that?

Well, man, I always think I know what the truth is, it's always later I don't think I know anything. I think that the truth is...God that's a tough question to answer. I think that in my situation I've reached a turning point to weed out what is false and what is true. And it makes life easier to know what's important and what is not. But I'd really hate to be defeating my own purpose by trying to label what those things are...

What did it take for you to reach this point?

It took five years on the road and having a lot of expectations about material success and having those crushed one after another, and finally learning what was really important was that I had everything I need in hand. And that my discontent was not external but really internal. I also learned to screw up, I guess. It has a lot to do with the expectations of the music business...You can't assume anything, so you really start living for the day.

What drove you to play music full time?

Ummm...well, I had a very bad car accident when I was in college. That's what really did it. It wasn't like I got out and 'Oh my God!' (jumping into music) it was a gradual thing really. Could have been an act of God, I don't know.

Do you want to elaborate on that?

No, not really...I mean, if someone asked my opinion of God, I would think that God was just another soul like us, except that "It" has been around a lot longer, and is infinitely more wise and infinitely more sorrowful. If I tried to sum up God then I guess I would be in a religion. You look at the world and you wonder: "You know, he probably doesn't have any more control than anybody does." But who knows...who the hell knows?

MOTORDOLLS

MUSIC, FOOD, ANARCHY and DRUGS

interview by Ken Knott

How did you each get involved in rock and roll?

Monique: I wasn't a rocker, originally. I liked everything but rock. Then I met these wonderful girls and they converted me from a gospel / R&B queen to a rock and roller...I never took time out to listen to rock or try to understand it until a friend of mine told me to audition (with these girls), and it was really fun. I didn't really like it at first, but the more I partake the better it gets.

Dana: My corrupt older sister turned me on to crazy punk bands and snuck me into rock concerts - I didn't want to just watch, I wanted to do it. My older brother played guitar and was getting all this attention, so I went out and bought a bass and didn't have a clue what to do with it. I started listening to alternative radio, WDET Radios In Motion, and taught myself how to play.

Paula: Are you ready for this one? I started out on the piano, never got the piano at home and then my mom said, "Try the clarinet, you can try your brother's old clarinet." My teacher said, "Did you ever look at yourself in the mirror? You're doing it all wrong - you're blowing your cheeks out." Now, take Dizzy Gillespie and I rest my case. He blows his cheeks out like a fuckin' balloon. So, I said, "Mom, I can't do the clarinet!" So, then she said to try the guitar. I said all right and started taking lessons from this guy at church. I joined a folk group and did this folk group thing until I got to junior high and discovered drugs. The folk guitar turned into electric guitar and I was in a bunch of different bands with Mexican boys, playing in bars when I was 15, and now here I am in the basement of Mac's!

How long have the three of you been doing the MOTORDOLLS thang?

Paula: Off and on for ten years.

Dana: I went to Jamaica for five years. I'm a born again bass player. I took my bass with me but I didn't know they didn't have electricity so I didn't get to play it.

Have you ever tried to get more people in the band?

Paula: We did but they sucked, so we kicked them out!

Dana: We tried out different people, but they had personality direction conflicts.

Paula: They didn't really suck. I take that back.

Monique: We finally decided that the three of us are the nucleus of this band.

Paula: We were looking for a singer for a while, and none of then could blow me away - and I'm not that good! No one struck our fancy, so I ended up singing.

If you did get another person in the band, would it have to be a woman?

Paula: I don't think so, but these guys do.

Monique: We prefer it, but it's not written in stone.

Could I try out if I put on a wig?

Monique: Yeah - and shave your legs!

Paula: Just turn your head upside down!

Dana: We've only been the MOTORDOLLS for three or four years.

Monique: Actually, only for a little more than two years as a power trio.

Ok, now for the standard question: What's it like being a "chick" band?

Paula: The makeup thing sucks. I sweat it all off.

Dana: It's fun - I like it.

Paula: But you don't sweat like I do. I end up with a neckful of lipstick.

Dana: KISS did it, so we can do it...Um, I think we always have to prove ourselves to those that have a preconceived attitude that we're gonna suck. And even after we do prove ourselves, people sometimes don't take us seriously or think we're a novelty. I still think it's a real "old boys" network out there. We are outsiders on the scene as a "chick" band.

Even in your own scene?

Dana: Oh yeah, definitely.

Monique: Just like the corporate world. This rock-and-roll thing is a signaway with the female thing.

I thought that went away with L7.

Dana: As an interesting example, in reviews of our music we're compared to other chick bands like L7 or Babes in Toyland when our music is more like Black Sabbath! They can't see us as our own entity.

What's going on right now with the MOTORDOLLS?

Dana: We're promoting our own CD and working on material for the next.

Paula: We're working on a new Thin Lizzy cover!

Cool! Which one?

Paula: "Johnny." We're going to debut it tonight.

What about touring?

Paula: This is it, babe! Hahaha.

Dana: We want to tour. We've got scheduling difficulties and we need a van.

Paula: We need transportation, hotels, food...

Monique: Money is what we need!

What do you really want to accomplish as a band besides making music?

Dana: We'd love to get a record deal. We're doing it ourselves on our own label, and we have distribution, but we just want to be a band.

Paula: We're swimming against a strong current in this world of rock and roll vomit...

Monique: We want to quit our day jobs and play music full time - we love our music.

Paula: We want to change the world!

Monique: We want to be the first mega-chick rock band! No one has done it. Like the first female Aerosmith, or female Rolling Stones. I'm naming these legends because even though they're from the past, they're still in the present. They made a name for themselves and they'll live forever. That's what we want to do.

Paula: I want to have fun. And to quote Vin Savage of Spinal Tap, "We want to have fun ole the time." I have a hard time being serious, but rock and roll is pretty non-serious. I mean we're serious, but I can be in the worst mood before a gig and when I'm on stage I don't even think about bills and shit. It's a total high. Aside from the drinks and the joints, it's still a high. Cheers! It's fun, too! Who doesn't like to be in a band and play in bars and get stoned, scream in a microphone and play loud? We're bad, I know.

What about veganism and anarchy?

Paula: I like flesh.

Dana: I lived with some vegans, and I was craving milk after they left. Anarchy...I think we always need a leader, whether it's official or not.

Paula: I went on this wonderful trip in the Caribbean one time with some vegans, and we were at this restaurant where these local people caught this beautiful grouper fish right out of the water, and this chick was so strict on being a vegan that she ordered french fries! But I don't look down on people that aren't into eating flesh. And anarchy...we need some leaders.

Drugs and punk rock?

Dana: I love the energy of punk.

Paula: I'm a punker at heart. I used to go to Bookie's, (with a) fake I.D. and drugs.

Monique: Anything is OK as long as you don't allow it to control you.

Dana: I like Nyquil.

Paula: I think crack is highly overrated. Why would you do something you could get instantly addicted to and kill people for? That's the one thing that really bothers me.

What about buttermilk and liver?

Monique: I love buttermilk.

Paula: I like buttermilk pancakes. I love liverwurst sandwiches with mustard and butter.

Any suggestions for our readers who want to start their own bands?

Paula: Get off your ass and do it!

Dana: Yeah, quit watching MTV, and get out there and sweat!

What about girl bands specifically?

Paula: Learn to play and cut your nails if you play guitar.

Dana: I'm sick of those girlie-girlie voices. Get some balls!

Paula: This gets back to the meat and drugs. Eat meat, do drugs, and hit the balls!

Dana: Be a full-bodied woman and don't be a wuss!

Don't Be Duped: Enlightenment a la Mike Hard

By Norene Cashen

THRALL

In the post-**God Bullies** age, singer, writer, and thespian **Mike Hard** shows he hasn't run out of the high octane fuel that has always driven him to lay down some pretty heavy ideas and express them in his signature on-stage trance style. With his new punk-with-acting-classes band **Thrall** (**Hard**, bassist **Karen Neal** and some re-shuffled members), **Hard** is still on track and speeding with a new album ***Chemical Wedding*** just released on **Jello Biafra's Alternative Tentacles** label.

Thrall delivers a heavy blow to lots of societal problems: personal freedom, politics, and a nationwide fixation with religion. While some of his concepts may come across as radically political or even surreal, one thing's for sure, he's dead serious about every one of them. And **Hard** lives to blast the words that express them into the faces of anyone who will listen. Take him literally, if you dare.

"Alistair Crowley, Karl Marx were just poor little rich kids sponsored by the ruling elite. Religion is the opiate of the people. Aldous Huxley, George Orwell were bankrolled by Big Brother and Big Business to create the Brave New World. Mass psychology and SOMA for the masses. Timothy Leary and Jerry Garcia were secretly used by the CIA to recruit patients for government mind control experiments. Psychoactive Psychotropic Psychodelic. I don't need Dionne Warwick to foresee the future." - **Mike Hard** (from the song "Psychic Attack")

How are you able to sustain such a high-fever pitch of emotion on stage?

I think the wild man or whatever is just a sign of the times. I need to communicate. I just go crazy. I have this heart that just explodes on stage. I don't know what it is. When the lights come on, it just happens. It's like the acting I've done. I don't have a lot of training with it. A lot of people I've done movies with have done Shakespeare, and they know all this shit. I just go out there and do it. I learn my lines, and I'm pretty much a one-take guy. It's just my approach. I think we've lost what it means to be a human being. I guess that communication process lets me be a human being again.

(Note: **Mike Hard** played a role in the 1995 **Gary Jones** film ***Mosquito*** starring **Ron Asheton**. Part of the film was shot in Michigan. It featured giant alien-zapped blood-sucking bugs that attacked humans.)

You have a very "normal" aspect to your life, right? How does having a family fit into what you do?

You have to have some normalcy in your life. What everybody is looking for is a freak show or something to get them weirded-out. Like that one guy. What's his name? **Marilyn Manson**, a name that glorifies death. This is what people want to see. It just shows the decadence in our society. It's like, "Wow, that's cool bondage gear." or "How many piercings do you have?" It's fascination with...a bunch of losers. I never bought into the whole **Charlie Manson** thing in the first place. I think he was nothing more than a dope dealer who took advantage of a lot of people. In fact, if you read other people's books, it's pretty evident that Charlie Manson went in there to get money back from people who owed him for drugs. It was a torture killing for drugs. But you can glorify death as much as you want. Our society definitely does.

What about religion?

From the very beginning, when I was a kid and my parents were married, they'd send us to a Baptist church on Sundays. It only lasted about a month and a half. But we were forced to go, and I come from a family of six brothers and sisters. It was like: load up the six kids and put them in this fucking bus. My parents didn't go. I think they'd just stay home and fuck on Sundays. "Yeah, send them to the Baptists." You know? Drink martinis and fuck in the 60's or whatever. So that was a really bad experience. I saw people raise their hands to be saved, and I made the foolish mistake of raising mine. Because I couldn't stand it anymore, and I noticed that those people who raised their hands got to leave and they didn't come back. So I thought they got to leave early. But I got back there, and it was like they wanted to "save" me. And I was like 10 or 12 years old, going, "Fuck this shit." So it was really weird, almost like a sensual thing. Then I joined the Navy and became a chaplain's assistant, who was the reaper of death. I would get the name from the Red Cross that somebody died, and I'd have to go find someone and tell them, "The chaplain wants to see you." That pretty much meant someone died... So I was always around this religious thing, and I felt like it was pushed on me. Religion is still my biggest enemy. I mean, that's who I'm fucking with the most. I think religion removes spirituality from inside of us to this white man who hung on a cross for us. So we are constantly looking up to this white man for our spirituality, and it doesn't exist. So if we start looking inside, we find it. I think that's what Jesus was saying. But it was totally misconstrued. It turned into, "The more money you make, the more money you can give for Christ, and the more money you give for Christ, the more money we can take in the church, and we can help people..."

The line "What I want is to not want" from the first song on the album, "Sometimes I Get This Urge" is an amazing statement. It's so to-the-point and so raw. It's hard not to get it right away.

It something everyone should get right away. We get consumerism thrown at us so much you finally feel like you just don't want to do another goddamn thing. Sometimes we are forced to consume, and it's so weird. That impulse... it gets my mind going. I wonder what kind of human being I would be if I wasn't taught to be a consuming one. That's the first song on our first record. I got the idea from the Renfield character from *Dracula*. He never actually said those words, but that was where his mindset was with Dracula. I played Renfield in the play ***Dracula*** two winters ago. That's what I picked up from doing that play. Here he was this successful banker, ready to get married and acquire this land in Transylvania. Then Dracula threw his mind off that, and Renfield ends up in an insane asylum (laughs)... But, as people, we consume a lot more than we communicate. And on the album there are a lot of songs that try to communicate. My purpose in doing this isn't to become famous. It's just to communicate a few simple thoughts.

What kind of feedback do you get from people who come to see you?

People who like us like us a lot. People who hate us hate us a lot. So it's really cool that there's no middle of the road with us. I like that. We don't like wishy-washy people. We like people who will put their foot down. People who will say something if something is wrong. Those are the type of people we are attracted to, and there's not a lot of people like that out there. The letters I get are mostly from people who relate to us.

Are they political?

I do a lot of political reading. I guess there's a lot of that in there. The guy who does that whole you-have-been-conned on the last track is actually a preacher, preaching in front of his young people's congregation. And it gets even worse later on. There's the kid who jumps out the window on LSD and the 14-year-old prostitute. You know, anything to scare the fuck out of these kids to get them to believe in Christ. The fear tactic will always work. The bottom line is: if you can't get them to submit, you can scare them into consuming.

How do you feel about what you're communicating to people?

I think the communication process is the only thing we have in the world. Being able to make another human being feel something, to me, is really cool. There is no life without communicating. You have most marriages breaking up in America because people don't know how to communicate. **Marx** said to have a good Communist structure you break up the family and destroy religion. And if you look at America, that's what's happening. The whole communication process is being destroyed. If men and women communicated, if black and white communicated... If everyone started talking about our problems, then you start solving things. In America we're taught we can walk away from anything at anytime. It's part of the consumer thing: "Oh, you don't like it? Try this then. You don't like this woman? Try this woman. You don't like this man? Try this one." When the fact is, all men and women are going to piss each other off eventually anyway. It's in our nature. It's more about being aware of that. **(the end)**

MAN...OR ASTROMAN?

Shawn Wernette

In the downstairs level of Clutch Cargo's, I got a chance to chat with **Star Crunch**, the lead guitarist of **MAN...OR ASTROMAN?** and a few of the other members of the Atlanta, Georgia-based sci-fi surf band.

ETCH: When Earth people say **MAN...OR ASTROMAN?**'s music is recycled and that it (surf music) has all been done before, what do you say to them?
Dexter X: They are totally accurate.
Star Crunch: Well, we are a band from the future so we can obviously time travel. Anything that sounds retro we created!
ETCH: Does Coco, the electronic monkey wizard, make up those low frequency lyrics as he goes along every show?
Star Crunch: No. Coco has no creative ability at all. It's all programmed.
ETCH: Van or Astro Van? Have you guys thought about putting that on your tour van (covered in glitter Kitty and a variety of stickers)? 400,000 is about your van, right?
Star Crunch: Yea we've discussed "Van or Astro Van" before, but decided against it.
ETCH: It was just too corny???
Star Crunch: Yea, right. 400,000 is about our Chevy van. (That is the amount of miles they were aiming to put on it) .
ETCH: Do you plan on getting another mode of transportation in the near future?
Star Crunch: We have another mode of transportation--our rocket, it's just that we can't find all the parts.
ETCH: You guys should get together with the professor from *Gilligan's Island* - he can make a radio out of a coconut, but he can't fix a hole in the damn boat.
Star Crunch: Yea, we should. No, actually we have plans for another earth-based Chevy.
ETCH: Mr. X, Birdstuff said you were a more recent addition to the band. How do you feel about your performance during the mission and will you ever learn the *Munsters'* theme song?
Dexter X: No, I probably never will (learn the *Munsters'* theme). I'm going on my second year playing in MAN...OR ASTROMAN? and it's going well.
ETCH: I heard Delta Airlines lost some of your stuff--you got duped?!?!?
Star Crunch: They (Delta Airlines, not Delta 72) lost one of the original **ASTROMAN** space suits (and some film etc.). The Delta employee who finds that (the space suit) is going to regret it - the mildew smell that it will have collected.
ETCH: Any final words for the fine folks in **ETCH**-land?
Star Crunch: Just give us your TVs and you will be saved from the apocalypse. Send them to:

MAN...OR ASTROMAN?
PO Box 250376
Atlanta, GA 30325.

LIFT OFF!

DELTA 72

Shawn Wernette

While on tour with **MAN...OR ASTROMAN?**, I was lucky enough to get to talk to the lovely **Sarah Stolfa**, organ player of the **DELTA 72**, an R & B quartet out of Washington DC that is currently on **Touch & Go**.

What's the worst thing that has happened to you guys on tour with MAN...OR ASTROMAN?
Well, tonight we got here really late. We felt really rushed (they played without doing a sound-check). I don't know - I guess that's it.
What about the heckler at the Club Soda in Kalamazoo?
I don't know. That was a bad night. Tonight went much better.
Do you think R&B can really be dated?
No. Not at all.
I see that you have a new bass player. What happened to your old bass player (Kim Thompson)?
She wanted to go to school and we wanted to be in a rock band. Conflict of interest.
What's your poison?
Tequila
Do you think DELTA 72 will come back to Michigan to play?
It will probably be a while before we play the Midwest again.

Unlike most R&B bands, DELTA 72 has really got the blues. They got the blues...the Midwest blues? Ciao!

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EAST RIVER PIPE LETS OFF SOME STEAM

by Mike Pfeiffer

EAST RIVER PIPE *is a guy named* **F.M. Cornogg** *who records beautiful folksy-pop from his apartment in Queens, NYC.* **F.M. Cornogg** *came up with the name* **EAST RIVER PIPE** *after he saw some sewage coming out of the East River.* **Cornogg** *began to view the world as the river and himself as the pipe spilling out raw sewage songs. That's why his songs are so bittersweet!* **ERP's** *latest release* **Mel** *is a fantastically short album about the weird and distraught neighborhood* **Cornogg** *lives by.*

Is "Mel" your everyman?
F.C. - Kind of, that's a good way to look at it. But, it's not "everyman," Mel is a guy I used to buy pot from in Central Park. In High School, I used to skip school a lot, and I would take the train to New York City and sit in Central Park and smoke pot. So, I bought pot from Mel, and since then I always had this idea to call a record "Mel" and this seemed like the perfect one. I always liked that name, "Mel," it's one of the little things that sticks in my mind. To me, Mel summed up the ultimate damaged person, and this record is all about the damaged people from New York. New York's like a de-institutionalized asylum.

My favorite song off Mel is "The Club isn't Open," but I can't figure out what it's about.
Wow! I'm not used to people actually asking about the meanings of my songs. It's about how the power structure of this country is controlled by white males and how it's difficult for anybody else to get into any place they can make a difference. You know how rich white males only play with rich white males. Then, there's another part of the song that's directed at indie rock elitists, of which I'm not a part of.

Because you do everything on your own and seem a bit on the eccentric side, you get lumped with people like* Chris Knox *and* Daniel Johnston*, do you think that's an accurate comparison?
I record at home, because it's the way I've always done it. But, I don't see myself as a flag-waver for low-fi recording methods. I just do what I do. My mind works like a painter's, where a painter won't start one half of a painting then ask somebody else to finish it. When you get other people involved with music, it tends to get real watered down. So, I've tried to take that away from my sound, and when I do a song, I just do a song. The important thing to me about being an artist is to have your own personal vision and carry it out.

It does seem to me that you spend a lot of time arranging your songs.
I do spend more time on them. Chris Knox and Daniel Johnston's stuff is much less arranged. If you're going to compare me to one man band people, I'd say I'm more like Todd Rundgren or Stevie Wonder. Ever since I was a kid and my friend came home with a Todd Rundgren album and it was just him doing everything, that's what I wanted to do.

Your guitar melodies remind me a lot of* Pat Fish *from* The Jazz Butcher Conspiracy*, is he an influence?
That's really wired. Because I've heard of him, but, never actually heard one of his songs. I remember this guy from *NME* (Mag. from England) told me exactly the same thing. I should pick up one of his records. A few other people have told me my stuff sounds like the Go-Betweens, which is a cool band, but I don't think I sound like them.

Mel has 12 songs on it and runs just over 36 minutes, how did you know this was the right amount for the record?
I'm not really sure. It just seemed a good song cycle. My past records have been longer. Ending on "Life Is Born Today" just sounds like the way to end it. And, we thought it was too short. But, after going back, it just sounded finished. It's like a short novel that said what it had to say. Some labels feel their artists have to take up the whole 74 minute CD, but Merge gives me the freedom to decide. All the greatest albums of the 60's and 70's were short. I'd much rather hear quality than quantity.

What's that way in the background of "Goin' Nowhere"?
That's a Fundamentalist Street Preacher in Times Square, just going on about some bent take on Jesus. And, I thought it was perfect. No deep meaning, it just sounded cool.

Do you consider yourself a tortured artist?
No, not really. The thing that bugs me is a lot of people in New York City pull this tortured artist bullshit. They wear Doc Martens and dye their hair, and walk around like artists but they don't do anything. Sure, I've led a pretty tortured life. Everybody's tortured.

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LiVE

WINDY & CARL MONAURAL

The Magic Stick Detroit 11/13/96

Local space rockers **Monaural** began the late evening with a completely improvised vocal-less voyage to the moon. Their 45 minute set of effects wizardry was seemingly lost in a black hole of lunar chaos and harmonic obscurity.

Guitar duo, **Windy & Carl**, followed suit with distant chord shapes and "Slowdive" saturated vocals. Unfortunately, I was ill-prepared for this sleepy combination of trance-inducing drones and angelic echoes. Two-thirds of the way through **Windy & Carl's** set, like a heavy dose of cherry Nyquil, I was out like a light - nodding off to dreamland via Windy's soothing lullabies. -- *Ryan Keberly*.

RASPUTINA

EARTH CRISIS GODFLESH

The Shelter Detroit, MI 11/15/96

Lord Bezmron,

The Earthlings are indeed a most peculiar race. They amuse themselves by assembling a group of persons that they have dubbed, "musicians." These "musicians" create nauseatingly high decibels of noise, whilst the remaining earthlings attempt to injure each other by propelling themselves from what is called a "stage." My attention was keenly drawn to the Earthling at the center of the musicians who was without an instrument. He seemed to be in excruciating pain -- screaming as if he was being burned alive by the apparatus clutched between his fists. Yet no one noticed his intense trauma, the earthlings simply surrounded him and joined in his fits of pain. A short time after the noise subsided the musicians excused themselves from the stage and a new group of noisemakers began to configure their devices for maximum decibel output. Although this new group of persons had only three participants, their noise was considerably louder and yet, I found it rather appealing.

However, as it is painfully apparent, I was unable to find any signs of intelligent life on Planet Earth. Thus, it is with your royal blessing, Lord Bezmron, that I am proceeding with Earth's destruction as scheduled. -- *Agent: R-25-A-14 K-5-B*

RASPUTINA

7th House Pontiac 11/15/96

There is an air of parody and charm as **Rasputina** come on-stage wearing corsets, Victorian under-garments, and carrying cellos as large as they are. The audience really doesn't know what to make of **Rasputina**. Melora sits center stage. She's the one who toured with Nirvana on their last tour. It's her beautiful lilting voice that speaks for the band while she plays lead cello. Agnieszka plays rhythm cello. Polish and very quiet, she studies the audience with suspicion. Julia plays the bass lines; her wrist is covered with dozens of silver bracelets and delicate chains, accented by a Celtic tattoo on her upper arm. All three women have long, glorious hair, at least three feet in length, flowing across their shoulders. **Rasputina** have added a drummer since their first release, to add drama and punctuation to their music and make it more accessible to audiences.

They open with "My Little Shirtwaist Fire," the closest thing to a "hit;" their signature song about clothes catching fire while cooking. The bass tones rattle through your bones and put a chill in your spine. I've often thought of **Rasputina** as the soundtrack to Edward Gorey cartoons and Dame Darcy's wickedly beautiful comics. There is an underlying evil to the music, like a poltergeist in a magnificent old house. They play 10 songs, most from their new release Thanks For The Ether. Two of the songs were covers: The big band hit "Why Don't You Do Right?" and Melanie's silly pop song "Brand New Key." Both songs now sound rather depraved. Even more malevolent is the song about "The Donner Party," comparing the Mayflower pilgrims with the Donner Party. Both groups' naiveté about frontiers' life lead to unfortunate circumstances. "What does 'settler' imply other than the willingness to settle for a meal of human flesh?" "Howard Hughes" is a study of the mental decay of the billionaire. The cellos are played so violently, they sound like electric guitars. The lyrics, taken from actual memos Mr. Hughes sent to his employees, explain the preparations needed for meticulous hygiene habits. Another study in perversity of human conduct is "Kate Moss;" an explanation of why models must be bone-thin, as told from the Moss point-of-view. Broken mirror shards lie strewn on the floor. The heavy drum beats of "Transylvania Concubine" mimic footsteps as Melora sings about museums and graveyards and the haunted life of the dead.

Even if you don't understand our music, or hate us, we hope you'll buy our scented candles. We make them our selves out of fat retrieved from a home liposuction kit.

I can't help but think of the humorous sexuality present, the band sitting bow-legged, their cellos pressed close to their breasts. Watching them gently stroke their bows reminded me of rug weaving, the threading of yarn through a loom, gentle waving motions that make the strings weep. They are sullen girls on a mission of dark seduction. -- *Allen Salyer*.

THORNETTA DAVIS FIVE HORSE JOHNSON GETAWAY CRUISER

THE BLIND PIG ANN ARBOR 11/22/96

Windy City blues via Cleveland, Ohio, **Five Horse Johnson** hooted and hollered in typical indecipherable blues-drawl fashion about the mean mis-treatin' ways of them evil swamp-witches.

Getaway Cruiser is the hottest college band in all of Ann Arbor. They all wear the coolest clothes from the local resale shops, they have the hippest hair-do's, all the right friends and manage to play some music! Sadly, I can never remember if the music they play is called Grunge TM, or Alternative TM.

While I was waiting in line for this show, someone drove by and asked "Who's playing tonight?"

The group that had assembled shouted in unison, "**Thornetta Davis**!"

The driver replied,"Who?"

The group then responded, "Never mind."

Ms. Davis has been playing her heart out nearly every weekend in the metro area for what seems like forever. If you haven't gotten wise by now, then it's your own fault. -- *Ryan Keberly*.

FEAR FACTORY KILGORE SMUDGE ANGER ON ANGER

The Birch Hill Night Club Old Bridge, NJ 11/2696

Seeing as how the first Pantera record sounded like Judas Priest, then it must be fine that **Anger On Anger** sounded like Pantera. They are an unsigned act from Jersey who appear to be a death metal band, but mostly fall in the Dewey Decimal System of Rock at .897M - between the Pantera & Cannibal Corpse selections, under Metal. A decent band, but I was most impressed when they handed out demo tapes while trying to get people to jump over each other in the pit. Not a bad idea!

Kilgore Smudge, who, admittedly, I originally dogged over their choice of band names, have unobtrusively crept into the display section of the Metal Library. Spawned in Providence, RI, the jewelry capital of the U.S., **Kilgore** is an imageless band. No silly vinyl pants, no shaved heads or dreadlocks, no facial overpopulation of piercings, no fashionable name-brand clothing, just loud rock. No image is still an image, but a good one. The music spoke for itself - 90's metal comprised of odd grooves, some chops, minimal soloing, scratchy, flow-oriented vocals and whatever the thing is called that causes your hand to air surf while they're playing. The highlight of the set was when Burton from **Fear Factory** came out and sang the Misfits' "I Turned Into A Martian" with the **Smudge**. As Popeye might say, "Me thinks they rock!" It seems like lots of people have been checking out this band.

One selection that is consistently on loan from the afroementioned library is **Fear Factory**. If 300,000 plus record sales without the help of commercial airplay is not enough reason to investigate, then I'll turn in my specs and bookmarks. Razor-sharp guitar riffs that pay tribute to metal's heyday combine with a warm & thumping bass line and electronic drum beats, giving it a small touch of industrial. You still can't consider them anything but metal, but they are trying to expand the genre. One other facet that sets this band apart from others is Burton C. Bell's vocal ability to switch from a proto-death metal growl to a harmonious singing voice. The crowd reaction was something all metal bands could enjoy, wall-to-wall action from several hundred fans singing along. **Fear Factory** is truly a great heavy band that even an infrequent bookworm could enjoy checking out. -- *David J. Ciancio*.

CROWBAR BILE OVERDOSE

The Wetlands NYC 12-4-96

It's amazing how life works itself out. I had planned on avoiding this show due to exhaustion & a cold. But something told me to attend regardless. **Overdose**, an incredible thrash quintet from Brazil joined as the opener spot for this tour after a Northeastern U.S. tour with Mercyful Fate. Perhaps one of the best metal artists of 1996, **Overdose** came out hammering the crowd with an intensity that many American bands lack. With vocals that are heavy without crossing into the death metal category and mad, crazy, chops & riffs, **Overdose** comprises what metal is and should be.

I'd heard stories in the past of what occurs during a live **Bile** show, expecting ultra-industrial noise, visuals & strange tortuous acts. Tonight, however, was a different story. The Energy Records staff assured me that **Bile** actually playing their instruments live, without accompaniment of a D.A.T. player, was much better. They were balls on & then some! After listening to **Bile's** 2 CD releases I thought it would be virtually impossible to recreate their sound live. Uncanny is the only word that can describe the **Bile** experience. Drum beats with better timing than a metronome, noisy, furious guitar and distortion-soaked vocals. **Bile** played so hard that the New York City Fire Department had to make an appearance! The smoke machine's emanations set off a fire alarm causing part of the power to blow and sound an alarm at the fire station. Once order was restored, **Bile** cranked back in while firemen in full battle gear stormed through the front door. They broke into a fit of laughter once they realized what had happened. They even jumped around and played air guitar with their equipment. Definitely one of the coolest/funniest things I've ever seen at a show.

How could a band possibly follow that performance? If you're **Crowbar** you get Jay Abbene from Souls At Zero to join your band, and you play the heaviest music you can muster up. **Crowbar** is a no B.S., stripped-down, slow groove, metal band. If you could take Black Sabbath, multiply their girth by ten and give them a new vocalist, you would attain **Crowbar**. Did I mention they were heavy? The crowd wasn't sure if they should've been moshing or head banging. **Crowbar** is hardcore on 1/3 the speed. -- ***David J. Ciancio***

MAN...OR ASTROMAN? DELTA 72 QUIXOTE CASH MONEY

Club Soda Kalamazoo 12/5/96

Heavens To Mergatroid! This was the best show I've ever seen in the whole entire world - universe, even! And I've seen some killers! (Jesus Lizard, Steel Pole Bath Tub, Rev. Horton Heat). Two locals got the show rollin': **Cash Money** and **Quixote**. **Cash Money**, a two piece blues sideshow, that being only a guitar player / singer and a drummer. The duo fit into their blues nice and snug, and delivered a good solid sound. However, the vocals went unheard and the music as together as they had it just isn't my cup of Joe. **Quixote**, on the other hand, play the type of music that messes with my head. The group features members of L.A.P.D. Riot Midgets (crazy drunk punk), First Kavale (heavy, man) and Jihad (even heavier!). Although I caught the first half of their set from the Men's Room, **Quixote** sounded great. Reminiscent of the type of sounds Party Of Helicopters, Harriet the Spy, Philo Beddow, and other sonic troublemakers have been known to make. Very Climatic. Very Tense. Get Down!

The **Delta 72** came to town with G. Foreman blowin' his harmonica and jumpin' across the stage like the madman that he was. Dig that crazy slide guitarwork, Mr. Foreman! Sarah Stolfa's fafisa added the type of sound to the **Delta 72**, that made them a soul wrenchin', cold sweatin', R&B machine. Coco, of **Man...Or Astroman?**, made fun of **Delta's** guitarist, shouting "Who does this guy think he is? G. Daddy Foreman???". Foreman told Coco to shut up and then made a comment like "don't think surf music has never been done before!" Two band members making fun of each others bands! It was hilarious! Unfortunately, this inspired a heckler in the crowd to make nonstop comments during the rest of their set. "You're dyslexic! It's 1996! Not 1969! " he shouted. The heckler, a goony looking overweight slob wearing a stupid black nylon hat and glasses, kept at it all night, until G. Foreman broke. During a slow groove, the heckler began making obnoxious and unamusing fart SFX. At this point, Mr. Foreman set his guitar down and gave the heckler what he deserved! After this incident, the **Delta 72** called it quits! He should've fed that fathead a big 'ol knuckle sandwich! A bad night for the **Delta 72**. The whole thing got my adrenaline flowing and I could hardly wait for **Man...Or Astroman?** to arrive. We waited enthusiastically while the soundmen decorated the stage with old T.V. sets, an unusual array of wires, colored lights etc.

Then **Man...Or Astroman?**, each wearing their own individual spacesuits (except for Star Crunch) marched on stage and got geared up with their instraments. They blasted into riff after sonic riff of hyperactive space surf, lifting off with "TV," "UNO," and "XL-3." Before breaking into their cover song (with words), Dexter X announced "this song is about our least favorite part of the human anatomy and our least favorite audience member..." These guys put on one hell of a show. Coco, the electronic space monkey ran around the stage pretending to yell lyrics into a microphone marking strange sounds with his bizzare spacey sound FX pedalboard unit, and acting like what most earthlings would call "a total spazz-oid"! Dexter X and Star Crunch tromped around like a couple of crazed cyborgs and Birdstuff made some very unusual faces. At one point of the show, Coco lit a T.V. set on fire and put it on his head! Four film projectors ran space related footage in their backdrop. Each T.V. set filled with scenes from old sci-fi films. (One looked like that seismograph thingy on the original outer limits T.V. series). After "N-P" they wheeled out this huge contraption which shot out mega-ray-volts of blue colored electricity! In fucking-credible! This show was definitely a sci-fi spectacular! It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that **Man...Or Astroman?** use gimmicks, but they don't use them to cover up, just to give you a feeling of what it's like on their planet. If you've written these guys off as just another surf band, like I so foolishly did, seeing them live will change your mind. **Man...Or Astroman?** will take you on a trip to their world and back and you will have a lot of fun on the way. Logging Off, -- ***Shawn Wernette*** (with help from co-pilot Coley Dennis and thanks to Dad and Buzz AND special thanks to Brennan for K-zoo band info).

MAN...OR ASTROMAN? DELTA 72

Clutch Cargo's Pontiac 12/7/96

Destination: Pontiac. Mission-Impossible! I got lost in Detroit and nearly got in a wreck, driving my good friend's big green behemoth station wagon to Clutch Cargo's. When I finally got there, no one knew who **Man...Or Astroman?** were, including those standing right near the door of the Mill St. Entry where they were currently playing. Earth to Detroit! Come in Detroit!

Missed **Delta 72**, but got an autographed record. Got there just in time to see the last 20 seconds of **Man...Or Astroman?** (even that made my hectic trip -- the big fiasco, worth it!) who looked very out of place in this particular atmosphere. The audience looked baffled. Then the **Astromen** launched into "King of the Monsters" off of their most recent release ***Experiment Zero***. One of the few **Astroman** songs with lyrics - sung by Star Crunch. Some oversized ignorant earth scum in the front row tried picking a fight with Coco, the electric monkey wizard. Coco retaliated by attempting to kick him in the face and then he sat down and began driving his imaginary space vehicle. Not even half way through their set, Dexter X, Coco, and Star Crunch threw down their instruments, making an incredible amount of obnoxious spacey feedback. Then Birdstuff knocked over his entire drum set and carried a cymbal w/stand out into the crowd. Wow! They hit the self-destruct button pretty early this time! Star Crunch admitted feeling out of place IN-or, as Star Crunch put it "On this alien planet - Detroit" Return to the mother-ship, **Astromen**! There's no intelligent life down here!!! Abort mission. -- ***Shawn Wernette***.

DOWN MF THE CHINESE MILLIONAIRES OHIO

HOUSE PARTY LANSING 12-28-96

A Farfisa organ and two guitars connected to big and small boxes making big and small sounds comprised the music of the Ann Arbor-based **Ohio** that played this show. Their two-song set lasted 15 minutes. Then they stopped. I got the sense they were just fucking around...do they have real songs? Jammy / noisy / psychy.

The Chinese Millionaires punk rocked this late starting house party and gave it some life. Guitarist (Norm, insert his name here) kissed members of the audience he knew and fell into the laps of those he didn't. These boys got pure style, from the outfits, to the set list written on **CM** stationary, to the good ol' honest straight ahead punk sound that brought all the crusty kids out of the woodwork for this one.

Down MF played a bunch of their old 7" hits and came out with some new arrangements of songs on their Super 8 CD. "Sinking Ship" took on a moving, rocking quality, as did much of their set, and never seemed stagnant or uncertain. Comments overheard indicated a sense of pride concerning the career of this time-tested Lansing trio, and everyone except the neighbors seemed to really enjoy the music. Despite the arrival of Lansing Township's own Sergeant Looney, overall this last show ever of **Down MF** was - great - I, for one, will miss this band. -- ***Robin Redbreast***.

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THE DEANS CLOSED ON SUNDAY FUDGE GUN

Mac's Bar Lansing, MI 12/31/96

What a way to spend New Year's Eve! Three bands, three different styles (genres) and a full house. Before I go any further, however, I have to admit that **ETCH** booked this show, so if anyone senses any laxity on my part, please feel free to let me know c/o **ETCH**.

FUDGE GUN

Okie-doke, first up was an impressive young p-rock band from Flint under the moniker, **Fudge Gun**. This quartet blitzed through a set of quality tunes that took everyone by surprise, inc. yours truly. Fronted by a young lady with a set o' pipes that could put a charge in any room, **Fudge Gun** ripped the joint apart with their tight-as-heck music and intelligent lyrics. A band not to be missed.

Closed On Sunday followed with their brand o' power pop -- not too annoying. They've got a knack for hooks and they were tight. Not my cup o' coffee, but the crowd sure liked 'em. Plus their music induced some audience members to get up an' shake their cans, which is no mean feat in L-town. Musically akin to Cheap Trick and lyrically akin to The Meatmen, **Closed On Sunday** are sure to please anyone without discriminating tastes.

The Deans, East Lansing's rockabilly / surf / swing kings, tore up the joint with their unique retro roller coaster, making believers out of more novices. The crowd at Mac's were most appreciative (and it weren't cause o' the booze) whilst the band did their thing in high fashion. A tremendous set by a band deserving of your attention. -- *N. Zebrowski.*

MOTOR DOLLS WORKHORSE VIVIAN DARKBLOOM

Mac's Bar Lansing, MI 1/11/97

So, it's both my brother John's and my pal Matt's birthday and guess where yers truly was? Working the door of this show whilst the temp was down in the single digits. What the hell was I thinking??? I told publisher, Ken Knott, that the next time we start a magazine that we do it in Phoenix or anywhere else the temp doesn't dip below 40 degrees.

Anyhow, the relatively new Lansing, MI band, **Vivian Darkbloom**, opened the festivities with a tight set o' alterna-metal and ripped in their own distinct way. Now, I know some people might him 'em with the "g word," but I think the jury's still out before giving them that kiss o' death. My only rag: too many songs have the same tempo and rhythm patterns; but then again, the same could be said about the Melvins.

WORKHORSE

Workhorse, originally from Mt. P. but now based in "fashionable Ferndale," followed the brief intermission with their brand of heavy-handed aggro. They, too, were tighter-n-the-bejeezus, playing music a la Korn or Orange 9MM. Definitely had a groove going and the appreciative crowd lapped 'em up like mother's milk. These boys smoked!

Speakin' o' smoke, the evening's entertainment concluded with a set by Motown's **Motor Dolls**. This trio of femme fatales played their first headline gig in Lansing and proved up to the task. A couple o' songs were kinda disjointed, but after sitting in a bar greasin' yer skids, you'd be a lil' loopy too! The **Motor Dolls** take the whole notion that "chicks can't rock" and toss it out the window, (And, frankly, I'm glad the **Dolls** don't have ding-a-lings). Rhythm section, Dana & Monique, throw up a dense wall o' thud that can get Mr. D. Wood's head a bobbin' like one o' those thingys in the rear window of yer Granny's Lincoln. Meanwhile, git-player / voxer Paula has more balls than a racquet club, wreaking havoc on her instrument and snarlin' at the crowd between tunes. Boyo, I don't think the first-timers expected the crank the **Dolls** whipped on 'em, and brother, they're better people for it. -- *N. Zebrowski.*

EARTH CRISIS VISION OF DISORDER FURY OF 5 GUTWRENCH

The Stone Pony Asbury Park, NJ 1/11/97

Being a suburban, mid-westerner at heart, I don't get hardcore. I don't know the toils of inner city living or being in the hood. I also eat meat & drink alcohol. If I understood Brooklyn, NY better, perhaps I could've gotten into **Gutwrench**. Unfortunately, that's not the case. To be honest, this is a band following the path of Biohazard.

New Jersey hometown heroes, **Fury Of 5** could've headlined based upon the crowd response. All participants were involved in the show. You can't hang out in a hurricane & not expect to be tossed around a little. This band is not trying to get you to subscribe to any life philosophy. No veganism, no straight-edge-ing, no physical brutality, just anger & drive. **Fury Of 5** is about being yourself, striving upon your own ambition & proving one's inner-strength to succeed. It's about being hardcore. This is a band that did their homework. They were extremely energetic & they even had fun. Ending with "Kill Yourself" by S.O.D. proved that. In the dictionary, hardcore is defined as “absolute; unqualified; complete & positive.” Both **Fury Of 5 & Vision Of Disorder** demonstrate these traits.

Roadrunner's **Vision Of Disorder** is the kind of band you identify with, not the kind you get a message & direction from. That is the ingredient you must supply yourself to enjoy **V.O.D.** Remember *Tron*? Do you recall the “Laser-Grid Cycles?” They could change directions immediately, so can **V.O.D.**, thus proving the bands' ability to tightly lock down a groove. Very metallic, groove driven, scream/singing hardcore. It is good to be different. I highly suggest the purchase of their self-titled CD on Roadrunner, but I warn you; it won't be fully understood until **V.O.D.** is witnessed live.

Positively enforced vegan, straight-edge, hardcore leaders, **Earth Crisis** erupted on stage. Vehemently heavy music & vocals that only intensify the views & beliefs exemplified in the lyrics. Human rights, animal rights, Eco-defense, justice, & pollutant free mind, body, soul & earth. Many of the things we are not offered or taught in grade school. If you're into it this is the band to see! Three kinds of hardcore, similar ideas, similar motivation, similar outcomes, yet all different approaches. Hardcore for brotherhood & belonging. Hardcore for emotion and anger. Hardcore for learning & intelligence. I'm starting to catch on. -- ***David J.. Ciancio***

THE JESUS LIZARD BRAINIAC

St. Andrew's Hall Detroit, MI 1/16/97

Fore me this was a match made in heaven. Two of my favorite bands playing in one night (with only a few minor mishaps).

Opening the show was Dayton, Ohio's **Brainiac**. This is a great band, but unfortunately due to an unaware sound tech, **Brainiac's** unique sound was not well represented at this particular performance. I have seen them live in the past, and theirs is a high energy show that gets you going; this show was no different except for the problems with the sound. **BRAINIAC's** passion for odd sounds is even more apparent with such new songs as the one they opened with, “Fresh New Eyes,” which is on their upcoming six song EP, ***Electroshock For President***. This EP will be released, appropriately, on April Fool's Day '97. **BRAINIAC** is taking a break from producer Eli Janney (GVSB) for this project, and are working with Jim O'Rourke (Experimental Noise Band / Gastr Del Sol). In lieu of that, **Brainiac's** new EP has a more programmed, digital feel. Fans or people looking for something very out-of-the-norm should get this.

Headlining this extravaganza were crowd pleasers **The Jesus Lizard**. They played a super-powered, super sweaty set, including many songs from their latest release, ***Shot***, not to mention your old favorites. Mr. Yow kept the fun rollin' with his usual stage antics including, but not limited to, his numerous dives from the stage, passing the mic through the crowd, and almost (but not quite) exposing the jewels.

Guitarist Duane Dennison played marvelously as usual, busting out his jazz-rock solos with sheer ease, oblivious to his drummer's trouble in keeping up. For the uninformed, **The Jesus Lizard** has signed on new drummer, Jim Kimball (Laughing Hyenas, Mule), who just happens to play in the Dennison (meaning Duane) Kimball Trio. This is his first set of live dates with **The Jesus Lizard** and I must, unfortunately, say that he does not (yet) fill the shoes of former drummer Mac McNalley (who left the band recently). Bass player David Wm. Sims (never more than a few feet from the kit) seemed to be coaching Kimball throughout their set. Kimball seemed to be struggling somewhat, and at one point, began to play the wrong song; a hint from Sims helped him on his way. In the end, let's hope practice makes perfect. All in all, this was a well attended rock show with lots of drunk and satisfied people. (Do those go hand-in-hand?) -- *Susan Sweet*.

FREAKWATER RICHARD BUCKNER

The Majestic Theatre Detroit 1/18/97

I'd never been to the Majestic before, but was pleasantly surprised by the setup: a huge room with tons of folding chairs and people filled to the gills, actually listening attentively to the performance. The close scrutiny may have been a direct result of the evening's performers, **Richard Buckner** and **Freakwater**. **Buckner** played a stunning set of his re-thunk roots music as his smooth vocals enthralled the crowd. He alternated between his backup band and a solo performance. The real crowd pleaser however, was the unmistakable TWANG that is **Freakwater**. I even got a chance to ask the girls a few questions before the show. **Freakwater**, on the "notoriously-known-for-putting-out-great-music Thrill Jockey label," plays a serious set of what very well may be the only REAL country music surviving in our age of sold-out mainstream country crap, and the alterna-twang wanna-be's. I asked Janet Bean if she felt like a bit of an outsider on Thrill Jockey, as most of the other label's regulars consist of various ambient/instro electronic amblings such as Tortoise and Oval. Decked out in her red Roy Rogers get-up, Bean explained how she loves the label, and no, she doesn't feel like an outsider. O.K...dumb question. We spoke about various bands, etc. and the state of country music today. She listed her main influences as various punk bands, but said she grew up on the Carter Family and Hazel Dickens (as the trailer-park drawling Catherine Irwin also admitted) which accounts for why **Freakwater** is what it is. I also asked both Bean and Irwin about the last five albums they purchased. Unfortunately, I continued the latter part of the evening in alcoholic bliss, and darned if I could recall 'em now. Bean, also, stated that their first album will be re-issued soon on Thrill Jockey and they have a forthcoming album in the works. Anyway, I lit up a cigarette as **Freakwater** started off the night with their anti-smoking hymn "Smokin' Daddy." The pedal steel (a personal favorite) sounded blissful, and Irwin and Bean's harmonies left a Friday grin on everyone. The show was a serious hoe-down in the sweetest of ways. "I must be high," I mused, as the steel guitar and Irwin's drawl left me that warm fuzzy feeling in my gastro-intestinal tract. A quick glance around the crowd-silent room showed the other spectators had that same feeling. **Freakwater** shouldn't be missed (even though they want $500 up front for your town) by anyone. -- *Davis*.

DEAD RIVER DRAG

Club Soda Kalamazoo, MI 1/18/97

I've waited a long long time to hear this group of ex-members of **twitch** and **Rollinghead**, and what a night it was...besides the fact that it was my b-day, despite the fact that I was as drunk as shit, I could still focus clearly enough to realize that I was witnessing the resurgence of the Kalamazoo Local Scene. These boys were so ROCK!!! Dave Grant's vocals just echoed between my ears. Definitely one of the greatest shows I've seen in a while, a great while. They even did an old **Rollinghead** cover, "Lazy." Although all the members are from **Rollinghead**, with the exception of Kevin Oberlin, former guitarist for **twitch**, now playing bass, this group of musicians should easily carve out a unique sound. It's been two years, but **Dead River Drag** just hasn't missed a beat. -- *Durt 101*.

THE MT. MCKINLEYS ROCKET 455 STEEPLEJACK

Mac's Bar Lansing, MI 1/31/97

Talk about a scorcher! Three bands, three great sets! Leadin' off were Minneapolis' **Steeplejack**, doin' their hybrid country-rock thing, & doin' in grand style. Tons o' hooks, crisp harmonies, cool lyrics,. the whole shebang. Just under an hour of pure pleasure; these gents put on a great show.

Up next, the resurrected Detroit band **Rocket 455**, complete with new rhythm section. This was the first I'd seen 'em in well over a year, and they did NOT disappoint. **Rocket's** brand of 60's punk (MC5 / Stooges) has all the subtlety of a ball peen hammer. High energy skronk served up in big meaty chunks. The dual guitar attack provided by Marco-n-Jeff was relentless, like a wall of sound spreading through Mac's in a tidal wave that crashed down upon the crowd. It does my heart good knowing the knuckleheads are back at it.

Ending the evening were Pittsburgh, PA's **Mt. McKinleys**. Featuring ex-members of The Cynics, they played a cool brand of garage rock - tight as a drum and very satisfying. Way cool. They get hero points for employing a theremin. I always dig it when 30+ oldsters like myself can out-rock bands half their age. These vets were on, and the appreciative crowd wanted 'em to keep playing, but, unfortunately, it was last call. -- *N. Zebrowski*.

THE HENTCHMEN THE DEANS THE IN/SECT

Mac's Bar Lansing, MI 2/8/97

Overall, this was an excellent show. Opening were **The In/Sect** from Ohio who played a set befitting the long journey they made. Of special interest was their harmonica player/singer, who distinguishes the twang style--although he needs a bit of practice in his timing. They closed with a fair rendition of "Midnight Rambler."

The Deans possessed this event. I reviewed their Oct. 27 Torch & Twang show at the Small Planet and was significantly uninspired. The Mac's show proved me wrong. Energetic and tight, **The Deans** rocked the evening. Keep up the good work, boys.

The Hentchmen, a Detroit band, I had never seen before although they have made the rounds in E.L. in the last few months. Their sound is cemented by the organ front man making for a sound reminiscent of Laika & the Cosmonauts. Very pleasing to the ears and perfect for foot-stomping. My only bad comment is about the audience, which was sparse by the time **The Hentchmen** took the stage. C'mon people, if the spirit moves you, get up and dance. (I don't know what it takes to get these honkys to move, but something must be done...) -- *J. Verdusco*.

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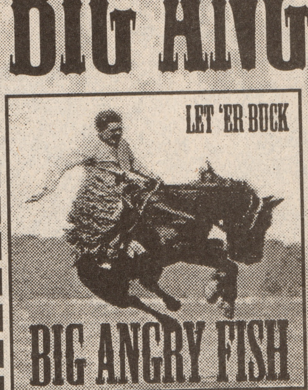

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HEAR

ABSCESS ***Seminal Vampires And Maggot Men*** **CD**
These guys are sickos. I think it's about time someone put the fun back into death metal, instead of putting out this gloomy doomy stifled "We are children of Satan, and can't laugh or smile or have a good time because we really are evil" image and package. This is like the "we're fucked-up, long-haired guys and screw you, we love it" package. Good to hear. (Relapse) Mazzola.

THE ACCIDENTS ***Why Are You Still Here*** **CD**
When REM began selling out stadiums and the Replacements split it gave Indie-Pop a swift kick to the head as far a musical validity goes. Unfortunately, we are still stuck listening to the same boring three chord songs from a million underground bands. I don't know how long it will take for this genre to pass the way of the Dodo but I hope it's soon. This album is directed towards the same people that still believe Michael Stipe is God and that college rock is still pure. I don't want to totally rip these guys apart, the song structure and sound is great, but this album is really redundant and repetitive. (KPH) Tim Arnold.

ADZ ***Piper At The Gates Of Downey*** **CD**
The band formerly known as the Adolescents. They are not exactly Adolescents anymore, but that does not mean the ADZ are any less intense. Expect nothing but straight guitar driven LA style punk rock here. The harmonizing background vocals are kind of cheesy. The lyrical content is fun but I think this is the first punk album I have heard with a Quentin Tarantino reference in it. Yuck! Worth a listen. (Amsterdamned) scott yahtzee.

THE ALMIGHTY ULTRASOUND ***Sonic Bloom*** **CD**
Well, this work is indeed interesting. While the modern rock bands of the late 80s (Living Color, Faith No More, etc.) have all come and either gone or moved to different things. This band brings it all back. This piece would be completely retro if it were not for the use of some interesting mixing techniques. All in all a good album; unfortunately, the sound is not very innovative. If you like solid Rock n' Roll, this is a good buy. Just don't expect to be blown away. (Countdown) Tim Arnold.

ANTI-FLAG ***Die For The Government*** **CD**
This album immediately got put on tape so I could listen to it in my car while I delivered pizzas. It has occupied my stereo for many hours. I played it on my Tuesday shift. I played it while driving to Flint. I played it when my car would not start and I had to wait for a jump start (even though the car was dead, the stereo still worked!) Anti-Flag are three guys from Pittsburgh and they write really good songs. I heard the *Kill Kill Kill* 7" and I was impressed. *Die For The Government*, which features songs from the 7", is even better. It is the best old-school punk I have heard in a very long time. Good production and an energy level comparable to Husker Du's *Land Speed Record* make this album great. Don't think Anti-Flag's early-eighties punk is stale, though. This album is packaged as a political statement, but lyrically that is not what they are all about. Usually, when confronted by a 'political' album, I cannot keep my interest throughout the whole album. Anti-Flag keep it interesting. There is many a "Fuck the U.S." song, but Anti-Flag has the ability to spread out wide in the lyrical department. Check out "Summer Squatter Go Home." COMPLETELY BRILLIANT F*CKING LYRICS. A song about kids that come into the scene and falsely proclaim to be squatters and leech off everyone until they get bored or get cold, and then go back home to their parents. Anti-Flag definitely is in touch with their surroundings, and they've got lots of good things to say. If you want to buy something good for a change, this is it. (New Red Archives) scott yahtzee.

ARCANTA ***s/t*** **CD**
Four song Cd from this Chicago trio. The music, written by Thomas Carlye Ayres ("Brother Tom") touches many points on the globe. The songs have a Celtic and Middle Eastern feel, while Brother Tom's vocals give the disc a dramatic flair. Fans of Dead Can Dance will relate well to Arcanta rather well. All listeners will find it rewarding and spiritual. If you're looking for music that is unlike any other this CD is for you. (Projekt) N. Zebrowski.

ARMCHAIR MARTIANS ***s/t*** **CD**
It seems we are doomed to repeat our mistakes, and this CD is a fine example. Something that should have remained a blemish on the historic face of music has now become a chronic infection since the advent of college pop-punk. (Headhunter / Cargo) Matt Bour.

THE BEACH BOYS ***Pet Sounds*** **CD**
THE BEACH BOYS "I Just Wasn't Made For These Times" / "Wouldn't it Be Nice" / "Here Today" 7 "
It seems nearly pointless to critique *Pet Sounds*, considering it has been labeled one of the top LP's ever released, say in the top two. It's 30 years and I'm assuming the gist of ETCH readers couldn't give two shits when the name "The Beach Boys" pop up. After all, it's a band your parents dug. Sub Pop had the guts to toss out three *Pet Sounds* tunes with different mixes ("Wouldn't It Be Nice" is a cappella). Which was a brilliant move on their part. That's one way to start off any curious seekers in an involvement with the works of Brian Wilson. Another way to start (my method) is to score Wilson's bio "Wouldn't It Be Nice," and understand that the guy wasn't nuts, but a man so fragile that it took very little to cause implosion. Especially the part devoted to the making of *Pet Sounds* (he let the other boys go out and tour and indulge in fame, while he's stuck at home composing). Yes, *Pet Sounds* is a true masterpiece. I'm not jumping on the critics' bandwagon. *Pet Sounds* is a very unconventional release, in terms of those that say Royal Trux's *Twin Infinitives* is a masterpiece (which it is). But the first hearing could cause listeners to scratch heads, and not "get it." *Pet Sounds* didn't sell all that great compared to pre Beach Boys' releases due to that "unconventionalism." What makes *Pet Sounds* so weird? Wilson's ability to go beyond guitar/ bass/ drums - he incorporates jingle bells, wood blocks, off-key guitar, strings, winds and more, creating a sort of hobo symphony to accompany his eccentric arrangement. There is not a single typical approach, but it all strings together as one coherent vision throughout. Next time "Wouldn't It Be Nice," Sloop John B," or "God Only Knows" pops up on the radio listen to the music. What are you hearing? When you hear it, what is it doing to help the rest of the song make sense? Yeah, it's theoretical but, once you reach that plateau, *Pet Sounds* will astonish your ears. Take it in stages. Read up on the making of *Pet Sounds*, score the single, then take the plunge. It may be like nothing you have ever experienced in your life. (Sub Pop) (Capitol) Bryan Ramirez.

ANTI-FLAG

MELANY JOY BECK ***Spitting Up Roses*** **CD**
Came upon this disk unexpectedly in Houghton, MI (home of MTU and not really a cultural haven) - actually it was played for me by a couple of guys who won't typically have anything to do with "chick music," but they loved this and couldn't say why. Let me give it a shot. Storytelling, toughness, a realistic vision of the world wrapped in good music. Low-key, wry delivery, sometimes sarcastic, sometimes with a true sense of poetry. Honest and direct, she cuts down to the base of emotion and then swings back around to point out the ridiculousness of it all. "Eddie Vedder (crash!) could prob'ly do it better, but he's not here, and he's not the one who wrote it..." Layers and layers of sound, body, and prismatic experience. Wonderful. (Classy Guy Discs) Beth M.

BIG MONSTER FISH HOOK ***Collecting Bugs and Pieces*** **CD**
Finger picking for simplicity under a folk guise could be a wandering lost gypsy in some dorky Java shop or an abandoned house upon a rocking chair keeping rhythm with the branches. (? - ed.) Too tattered to be whimsical, considering this drum-less, strum-full trio has a lady that's not afraid to strain her vocal cords on many occasions. Very gutsy. Thank God it's not dreamlike, more like waking up cold from a shitty nightmare. Consistent in its low-key approach with occasional male harmonies. Very sparse and very nice. "Mrs. Fox" finds itself being repeated many times. It's worth buying this disk for that brilliant tune alone. (Milk Crate) Bryan Ramirez.

BILLYCLUB ***(It's Better To Be) Pissed Off*** **CD**
A no holds barred kick to the head by a couple of former British boot boys and their American compatriots. Billyclub is good ol' fashioned (a la early 80's) Brit-punk. Big sing-alongs with tight, fast p-rock and great, crisp production. Idol records in Dallas has been releasing dandies so far, and this one jumps to the head of the class. This is punk the way it's supposed to be played. A very strong release. (Idol) N. Zebrowski.

MARTIN BISI Y LAS COCHINAS ***Dear Papi, I'm In Jail*** **CD EP**
Mr. Bisi has created a unique thing. ***Dear Papi*** walks a line between college alt-pop and mariachi. The music comes in bulky clumps strung loosely together. Bisi and one of two women sing each track, usually in harmony and building on each other. When Bisi alone sings, he is prone to bouts of Spanish speaking. All this adds up to an odd sum. Did I mention this band, as the name imparts, is entirely female? Of the four tracks on ***Dear Papi***, two pricked my ears. "The Woman From the Marsh" works well. It has a ghostly, shaman-like quality to it. Last track, "The Great Lady of the Spiders," is stronger than the others. It stays just shy of punk, and keeps to a well-delivered mariachi narrative. (New Alliance) J. Verdusco.

BLIND MELON ***Nico*** **CD**
When Shannon Hoon passed on back in the fall of '95, I couldn't help but be rather shocked, even though I didn't dig the band much because of their damn bee video, and some of their stuff just didn't click. The problem I had with Hoon's death was that it seemed that not many gave a shit. So their second LP flopped, big deal. He was, after all, a human being. Thereafter, I started reading a lot of the post-death Hoon articles and developed a lot of sympathy for Hoon, and empathy for the remaining band members. Here we have the swan song, a grab bag of outtakes and acoustic numbers done to-and-fro. Now, I'm gonna say this not because of my sympathetic side, but because the ear that I have for the acoustic side of life tells me this is pretty good stuff. It's pared down, it's Melon in the raw, just churnin' shit out 'cause it feels good and it's the right time. No pressures, no deadlines. It's Blind Melon at play, doing what a band is supposed to do; let it flow. This is a good ending to this book. Good luck to the survivors, and may Hoon rest in peace. (Capitol) Bryan Ramirez.

CANOOFLE ***Unorganized Flying Objects*** **CD**
Here's a warped and twisted low-fi adventure into UFO sightings and abduction. The songs are short and all fall like chapters in a book. Some like "First Sighting," with its wacky chorus of vocals and music that reminds me of the Residents, are enjoyable like a cheaply produced 50's sci-fi movie. Other songs are just forgettable snippets of sound. Overall, it's not a bad production for an independent release that really sounds like nothing else. (Lazy Eight) Mike Pfeiffer.

CARCASS ***Wake Up and Smell The...*** **CD**
Carcass are no mas. History. Done. Thank goodness. Don't get me wrong, I love this band, but the problem is

that there are two faces of this band: the first being the fucking over the top speed / death dirge that needs a scientist to graph out the music. Then there is the second face of Carcass where they just turned...normal. In the sense of just playing straight heavy metal. God knows why. Why abandon the hypercharge and the most offensive album covers for more grunge-inspired shit and fantasy painting covers? Who knows. Anyway, this disk has unreleased stuff, radio stuff, compilation tracks and stuff from EP's. If you need this, get it for the fierce last six tracks on the disk. Those rage. (Earache) Bryan Ramirez.

CARDS IN SPOKES *Stix, Nix, Hix, Pix* CD

Cards In Spokes formulate a skilled marriage of Bad Religion and Avail that travels highways of verse towards hook-saturated pastures of chorus. *Stix, Nix, Hix, Pix* is loaded with astute personality and commanding posture, deftly avoiding the spoils of punk's recent commercial popularity. (Allied) Ryan Keberly.

CATHEDRAL *Supernatural Birth Machine* CD

This is pure ear candy if you like your stuff heavy, slow and full o' artery cloggin' sludge. The Obsessed, KYUSS (gone but never forgotten) and Monster Magnet are three reference points, but Cathedral live in a world all their own, where the sun never shines and the volume knobs have been broken off at "10." "Black dove is a flying / From the Reaper's hand / You'd chase the white if you weren't blind / A banquet for the living / Skeleton at their feast / Sin's a bad man's lover / Whose soul's lost in a pentagram." In the shadow of the upside down cross, Cathedral are livin' for givin' the Devil his due. Probably way too "scary" for a pork pie like CBH3. (Earache) D. Wood.

SHEILA CHANDRA *A Bone Crone Drone* CD

The name says it all. Mostly vocal drone with few accompaniments. Very down-to-earth, Indian-flavored metaphysical body buzz hypnotic solid drone. This can raise your spirit, balance your inner self and create an endorphin buzz of bliss. (Real World) Bryan Ramirez.

CHRISTDRIVER *Everything Burns* CD

Everything burns. Indeed it does. This disc is loud, HARD stuff. It hurts. It calls to mind a time when the Swans were still raping slaves. These guys are probably playing music to stay out of jail. "Sight" is probably the strongest track here, followed by "Drone." You can't label this, other than really, really loud. Christdriver are looking to hurt somebody. Maybe it's you. (Profane Existence) mpayok.

THE CHROME CRANKS *Love In Exile* CD

Ah, the new Cranks cranks, son. It accentuates Bob Bert's (Pussy Galore) unusual drumming style and Peter Aaron's retarded nasal yelps. But it kicks. They tone things down a little from their previous albums, incorporating some slow builds and quiet moments, but the album is hardly sparse from their usual psychotic thrash-o-billy noise. Aaron pleads on "Hot Blonde Cocktail," "I don't wanna know your name...I just wanna watch you dance...", and then proceeds his trademark guttural screams. They also do a great version of the traditional "See That My Grave Is Kept Clean" which rocks harder than anything I've heard yet this year, in a subdued kind of way. I'm just sorry Jerry Teel (Honeymoon Killers) didn't have more of a voice in the song-writing process, cuz I think he's the coolest one. (PCP) Davis.

CLOSED ON SUNDAY *All The Way* CD

10 songs -- goofball lyrics -- power-pop from Bloomington, IN. Imagine a high school Cheap Trick with three smart asses writing lyrics designed to get their classmates guffawing. The hooks are okay, but the lyrics are too juvenile for my taste. If you dig silly, you'll dig Closed On Sunday. Points for a great cover, though. N. Zebrowski.

THE CLOUDS *Collage* CD

This is an offering from Down Under covering the recording career of The Clouds from '91 to '95. It's pretty happy-go-lucky, summer day pop tunes with lots of gruff. I normally cringe at that "Gee-whiz" mode of pop, but these two gals and two guys throw in these outrageously great melancholy hooks that make me want to...you know...make out with a girl or something. Not far from the Fastbacks / Buzzcocks / Breeders regime. Great harmonies, great pop tunes and there isn't any reason why this shouldn't climb the indie-charts. You heard it here first. (Altered) Bryan Ramirez.

THE CLUTTERS *s/t* CS

Five songs: country old style on the one hand, but it takes second place to the gleefully off-beat attitude and love of silliness on the other. There's a lot of twang going on here, and my only musical complaint is that the violin sometimes gets overpowering, but this stuff grows on you like out-of-control sea monkeys - just add water! The first three songs are better than the two on side B, but I think that's just because the two are more straight country and a bit less original. No masterpieces yet, but definite potential for a really good time. Beth M.

COAL CHAMBER *s/t* CD

Emotions are running rampant again, folks. Like a flooded river, Coal Chamber drown us with their problems. Like almost every other band or artist, Coal Chamber vents their frustrations onto an album. The CD's fourth track, "Unspoiled," is one man's account of a seriously deranged relationship. "Unspoiled" is complimented by soft-to-loud guitars, disturbing tempo changes and the loud squeals of "Do I seem all right to you?!?" Lead singer Dez carries us through a story we all can relate to. Don't worry, we all feel your pain, brother. "Unspoiled" sparkles with musical creativity and shows what Coal Chamber can do. Unfortunately, the rest of the album sounds like something we've all heard before. "Loco" sounds like a song Korn might have loaned them to complete their album. Lyrical brilliance may have been present on "Unspoiled," but "Sway" is pure macaroni and cheese served up fresh. How many more times do we have to listen to the lyrics: "The roof, the roof, the roof is on fire / We don't need no..." Oh, you know the rest... They seem to drop in line and follow the leader quite a bit too much. Coal Chamber is basically a guitar-fueled band. But I think that is a pre-requisite in order to be on the Roadrunner label. This band has the opportunity to be a very decent band. However, nothing is really new or exciting on this CD. It all sounds too basic and, at times, downright boring. Coal Chamber would really benefit from emerging out of the chamber for a breath of fresh air. (Roadrunner) Chris Wardell.

coal chamber

GERALD COLLIER *I Had To Laugh Like Hell* CD

This LP is so cynical and dark, I could not resist it. "Whored Out Again" opens the album; it about sums up the treatment Collier got from MCA Records while fronting Best Kissers in the World. Lacking proper sales, MCA would not take a chance on BKITW's sophomore release. The group gave up and now Collier is back with an "I like getting kicked in the head" mentality. On ***Laugh Like Hell***, Collier tackles disappointment from every imaginable angle. He covers God, women, and justifications for drinking. (What else is there?) "Boozin' Time" is a completely hopeless masterpiece; he artfully reworks a country standard theme of drinking for healing. "Rumpled Up" celebrates emptiness ("it never crossed my mind / that I could be left behind"). "I'm Not Coming Back" is a twang that everyone can relate to about being sick of it all. Overall, ***Laugh Like Hell*** is a good soundtrack for dejection and whiskey. Collier's biggest drawback is an occasional lapse into Evan Dando territory, but the clever nihilism of the lyrics will make it up to you. (CZ) J. Verdusco.

THE C*NTS *Why Baby?* CD

It seems to me that if you were going to have a name like The C*nts and a label named "Disturbing Records," that you should match those titles with the music. Personally, I'd expect porn / snuff rock. Maybe songs about shit eating or having sex with cows or something over totally freaky hardcore or Hammerhead / Feedtime type music. Instead, the music sounds like that above-ground, New Wave scene that happened in every city from the late 70's until the mid 80's. Y'know, riding the punk gimmick but never sending anything over the edge (I'm talking a funny haircut with loud color clothing, synthesizers and saxophones included). The C*nts are "punk" but fit a little more into the aforementioned New Wave thing. The riffs are lifeless and elementary. Sort of "Dead Boys lite," but really stiff. Lyrically, it's hung up on some chick. Also, it has keyboards. Steee-rike three!!! I'd give it credit if The C*nts were having a good laugh whilst recording this, but I'm inclined to think not. (Disturbing) Bryan Ramirez.

THE DAMNED *Not Of This Earth* CD

Billed as "the first new album in 10 years," I'm not convinced there's anything to get overly excited about here. Dave Vanian, Rat Scabies, Brian James and Alan Lee Shaw recruited Glen Matlock from the Sex Pistols and Moose from New Model Army, as well as Kris Dollimore from the Godfathers to re-create the sound that helped define an era. But other than the obvious nostalgic qualities this reunion has, the sound rings hollow most of the time. There are exceptions: track one, "I Need A Life," is potent and full of the same piss that streamed through classic Damned records 15 years ago. There's supposed to be a tour to support this record, but I haven't heard anything yet. (Cleopatra) D. Wood.

MASON DARING *The Great War and the Shaping of the 20th Century Original Soundtrack* CD

The title pretty much says it all. The music herein was the soundtrack to the PBS masterpiece (which I, the historian, missed). The music, like history, runs the gamut of emotions, from triumph to tragedy. The music is well-written, the production is flawless, and the musicianship first-rate. My only criticism is that since the music is for specific scenes, the songs are over in a rather short time. Just when the music is starting to build, or when you're expecting another movement, it stops (the longest piece on this CD is only 3:33). All of the music, it should be mentioned, was not written solely by Daring. A number of songs were written by Dana Brayton and Jeanine Cowen as well, and their compositions stand up equally beside Daring's. In total, there are 29 works here, with a total running time of about 45 minutes. Recommended to fans of film music and this special. (Daring) N. Zebrowski.

DAVER *Two Years Of Being Singles* CD

I hear he is called the "King of Pure Pop." This is definitely pop. Sounds a lot like he has been influenced by the song writing of XTC. Daver is a one-man band, meaning that he plays all the instruments himself. I tried to appreciate this in the commercial early 90's 'Alternative' sort of way. I dunno, it is OK. In truth, it just makes me want to go pull out my XTC records. (Modern Relic) scott yahtzee.

RONNIE DAWSON *Just Rockin' and Rollin'* CD

This 16 course, ready-to-serve rockin' meal is an instantly satisfying roots experience. It delivers all the energy and vitality of Mr. Dawson's outstanding live act - a perfect "mono" souvenir for us who've had the pleasure of witnessing him first-hand or a primer for those of you as of yet uninitiated into the magic that

Ronnie cooks up nightly on stage. Recorded overseas at Toe Rag Studios, London, it warmly captures that primitive guitar mayhem that Ronnie and guests wring out effortlessly and with loving abandon. Not really pure rockabilly or retro rock-and-roll in any sense, but a solid, gritty guitar groove that mixes their feelings and rhythm into a fun, toe-tapping party. "Just Rockin' and Rollin' " commences the festivities with a boppin' blues blast, courtesy of Alex Bland's and Ned Bennet's horns. "Veronica" is a lovely Spanish guitar-rocker with nifty harmony vocals, and "Mexigo" is greatly benefited by a Latin acoustic break provided by Eddie Angel. "Sucker for a Cheap Guitar" would describe almost any Ronnie Dawson fan, and in his own hands this anthem becomes a testimonial to garage sales and garage bands! Excellent effort and a testament to Ronnie's enduring talent. (Upstart) Del Villarreal.

DEAD VOICES ON AIR ***How Hollow Heart...*** **CD**

Quasi-ambient soundscape filled with lonely shadows, dead end streets and haunted asylums. Throughout the scene is the dull throb of a dying heart, as it beats blood trickles through fingers, mirrors crack, phantom cars crash and the dead peel petrified lips into crooked smiles as they listen. (Invisible) Matt Bour.

THE DERITA SISTERS AND JUNIOR ***Too Lazy to Steal*** **CD**

These fellows are excellent at disguising bad pop punk as social commentary. I think this is supposed to be funny. Less than mediocre pop punk with tons of references to the band's multi-racial background. Politically moronic, this sophomoric release raises non-existent issues, and champions them. Some of the singer's time is spent mimicking Jello Biafra, the rest of the time he can't sing. Listed in the bonus tracks is The Exploited's Class War, but it's not really there. I would be impressed if any member of this band breaks the age barrier (over 16). Lame. (Real George) Pants Mulligan.

DISMAY ***In Doubt*** **CD**

This New Haven, Connecticut quintet's tone is thick and edgy, yet stale and over-produced. Much like every hardcore band nowadays (Deftones, C.O.C., Korn, and realistically any metal/hardcore band who has released an album in the past 2-3 years), Dismay are just following the trend of de-tuning their guitars to sub-harmonic levels in hopes of producing a deeper and thicker sound. Essentially, the outcome is the same gloomy mish-mash of uninspired sludgery that sounds oh-so-familiar, and at the same time easily forgettable. Dismay's musicianship does, however, exhibit some potential, but raspy monotone vocals and laughably trite lyrics keep *In Doubt* from showing any true promise. (We Bite America) Ryan Keberly.

DITCH CROAKER ***Secrets of the Mule*** **CD**

I was definitely taken aback after hearing Ditch Croaker's *Secrets of the Mule*. I figured with a name like Ditch Croaker, I would get some run-of-the-mill industrial or metal band. Instead, I got a very melodic and quiet pop band. "Riverside Estrangement" starts out as a surging ball of energy that explodes into a soft glow. One might think of day going into night, as soft guitar work carries "Riverside Estrangement" to an eerie climax. One thing you can't deny is Ditch Croaker's ability to break a song down and start it back up again. This "ability" is showcased on almost every track. Drummer Tim Barnes carries Ditch Croaker well and provides a solid foundation. Singer Tim Newman's vocals propel songs "The Pimp" and "Library Shrine" on their way to pop music nirvana. Ditch Croaker sounds like they really want to let their hair down and cut loose. "Hebba Ho" is a perfect example of this. Getting a little louder and crazier may be just what the doctor ordered. But for some reason or another, Ditch Croaker hold themselves to a quiet roar. (Reprise) Chris Wardell.

DITTOHEAD BY FATSO ***s/t*** **CD**

Wanted to like this so much, but it sucks. This is the best these people could come up with? Nobody deserves to have their bones picked clean more than Flush Limbaugh and instead of concentrating on that, these noodles had to try and get "creative." Some silly dance mixes combined with snippets of Fatty's radio program. I coulda done better myself. (Splatt) D. Wood.

DOGTOOTH ***Steel Vines*** **CD**

This is an open letter to those considering a career move to musicianship. Before you jump on your high horse, consider these factors: You want to make a career of music because A: the Money B: the Chicks C: the Passion. If you picked A or B, please kiss my ass and resume your original career. If you picked C, very good! Go for it! That might mean you have something true and original to offer. So many bands simply recycle what's already available to the public through TV and radio popularity. A lot of local bands admire and copy popular artists in order to score good paying gigs and big crowds. We've all seen this pathetic method in any college town. Plus, are fans of these bands actually fans of music? It's a passionless trait. I have no clue what Dogtooth are trying to do. Their CD contains too many popular artist flavors. What good does this method do except waste this critic's time? This musical epidemic only grows with fervor, and the only way to beat the plague is to ignore it. Please, ignore this disk. (Airline Spyplane) Bryan Ramirez.

EDGEWISE ***Silent Rage*** **CD**

Edgewise does for Black Sabbath and the Cro-Mags what Oasis does for The Beatles. I honestly hate to be so negative, but *Silent Rage* blandly reiterates the starched aggression of The Cro-Mags while literally imitating Black Sabbath note-for-note on "Even the Score." (Gain Ground / Edgewise) Ryan Keberly.

EBELING HUGHES ***The Little Bugs Grow*** **CD**

This is an out of nowhere project by two guys named Robert Ebeling and Charles Hughes. I've never heard of them, either. My, what digital toys they have. This is a schizo serving of prog-rock reaching at least two of the four corners covering this particular genre. Sticking pretty much to the well-known keyboard humpers of E.L.P., mid-70's Pink Floyd, Alan Parsons or something along those dramatic lines. Sure, it gets trippy with its synth flippage, but the gaps for more sound are quite apparent. There are a few heavy Jon Lord thumpers that are preferable, but too quickly lost in the evolving airy dreamscape pattern. Not too horrible though! It's just that sometimes it gets very mathematical and even predictable. (Static Violet/Rust Belt) Bryan Ramirez.

E.X.P. ***Debut*** **CD**

This disc took yours truly by surprise. I'd come across E.X.P. on a gothic comp. Cleopatra released it last year and I was expecting something of the Goth variety, but *Debut* is much more interesting. The music is reminiscent of early experimental bands like Savage Republic. The music challenges the listener with it's dense musical spectrum. Add multiple, simultaneous vocal tracks and various samples and you have E.X.P. This is a rich and completely satisfying record. I'm looking forward to hearing more from this unique band. (Hollows Hill) N. Zebrowski.

FEISTY CADAVERS
fire up

FEISTY CADAVERS ***Fire Up*** **CD EP**

Life goes on for the Feistys, who've shown nothing but courage and an impressive work ethic since the murder of their singer Steve Krass over a year ago. This is a brief four-song blast produced by Tim and Andy Patalan and Speedballer Bill Kozy at The Loft in Saline, MI, and it displays the full tenacity that the Feisty Cadavers are famous for. (Hear, hear! -ed.) *Fire Up* stands as a fitting memorial, as well as being a true Motor City rump shaker. (SGK/Idol) D. Wood.

THE FIXTURES ***Devil's Playground*** **CS**

Sensible, wisecracking, smart-ass punks from Encino, CA give ya their two-cents worth on A through Z in God's green acre (or the devil's playground), minus the Green Day, but with the modern, candy-coated sound heard on labels such as Hopeless. I haven't heard anything on the Alternative Tentacles label since the Dead Kennedy's, which coincidentally The Fixtures remind me of every time I listen to this. D.K. moderne or a Hopeless Alternative? (Alternative Tentacles) Shawn Wernette.

THE FLANNEL TUBS ***Plaster, Puke & Politics*** **CD**

I hereby deem this disc "Goof Twang." This term isn't so off-kilter considering each and every song deals with the simplest of topics with a goofy country-esque twang of sorts. Silly aliases, extreme hick accents on some songs from these city slickers (Chicago). Overall, I'm being honest with my newfound title directed on this here disc. So who's to argue? No less, it's effective in the overall purpose of nothing but a dang good time and you will have a damn good time with this disc. (Flannel Tubs) Bryan Ramirez.

FLOODGATE ***Penalty*** **CD**

Alice In Chains, C.O.C., Seven Mary Three, maybe even Candlebox or newer Metallica. This might as well be any of the above, and any others I'm sure you could think of. It's not that it's all that terrible, but it's been done and done and done. It's like a flyer posted in a music store that says "Guitarist Wanted. Influences:..." and then they turn out really sounding like them. (Roadrunner) Mazzola.

SUE FOLEY ***Walk In The Sun*** **CD**

Damn! You don't find many ladies that can throw a mean blooze lick whilst hollerin' for the lovin' of a good man! Well all right! Foley is solid in song writing and tossing out some real good honky-tonk with a vocal style like Lucinda Williams. This is a blast, and the strength of it all can take you through the roof! Sue's sass factor rates a "10," y'all. (Discovery) Bryan Ramirez.

ROBERT FORSTER ***Warm Nights*** **CD**

Answer one question for me: Why is Robert Forster seen as a mere footnote, or just the "former member of the Go-Betweens"? Forster put out an LP titled *Danger in the Past* some years ago, and that was it. Oh, he's released some stuff since then - but how come it never made it to my ears or eyes? Is it because RCA (his former label) are morons, and can't promote worth a shit? Beggar's Banquet are doing their job to let the world know that this Romeo Muse still exists. A personal thank you to those concerned. Forster's latest offering proves that this coyote still howls passionately at the lonely moon. He's a jester in the court of L. Cohen, yet still not asking for laughs. *Warm Nights*' approach is much more stripped down than any of his past efforts. The CCR / Dylanesque aura truly focuses on Forster's ability to croon a story with a gutsy / electric folk backup that gives you a plain-as-day picture, as simple as that never-ending desert horizon. Production by Edwin Collins helps, because you get what you get. It's "as is." A full band pick up their instruments, plug in, play, it's done. No frills. That is the beauty of this disc. Forster has always been a great songwriter, if not one of the best of the past two decades. Strip away the gloss, expose pure heart and soul. It takes a real man like Forster to praise loneliness, keep walking tall and graceful, and even acquire a chuckle out of the worst. Or maybe the worst never exists? Regardless, as long as Forster strums away, sending that spark of hope from an empty room, it doesn't. Not to say that he's playing the martyr - that's too easy. Forster rockets his manifesto toward those with a net to catch its fall - to cherish it or rival it. If you can comprehend any of this or dig something in the style of the aforementioned musicians, but with a truly brilliant and individual approach, then I will guarantee that you would regret not giving this disk a chance. Another top release of '96. (Beggar's Banquet) Bryan Ramirez.

THE 4TH FLOOR *We're All Good People...Except the Jerkoffs* CD

The 4th Floor, so named because of the fourth floor apartment shared by the band, certainly has a place on any roster of music to drink to. The music is not too complicated, full of testosterone and just plain fun. Hailing from various parts of NY and Australia, The 4th Floor blends 1975 rock and roll with punk outbursts. "Sasquatch" tells of a family of the abominations living in The Big Apple as Hasidic Jews. "Great Day" extolls the small wonders of day-to-day existence, like not getting parking tickets. "Suicidal Alcoholic" flashes back to the heyday of Black Flag. Pure funk creeps onto the album on "Join Da Party" - the chorus entices listeners to "grab a hottie and stroke your body." The title track is as much fun as it sounds, and oh so easy to sing along with! A hidden eleventh track is tacked on the end; a damaged-ska ditty that proves the irreverent versatility of the 4th Floor boys. (Paradigm) J. Verdusco.

FUDGE GUN *Dirty Billy* CS

Way cool punk tape from Flint. This group is HOT right now and after giving this more than just a few listens I can see why. Above average song writing, great vox and intelligent lyrics put these guys at the head of the class. Recommended. (Youth Is King) N. Zebrowski.

FURIOUS GEORGE *Goes Ape* CD EP

So it's 1987, and I'm booking p-rock shows in E.L., and one o' the bands is the NYC-based politico-punks The False Prophets. Anyway, gettin' to know the band (since they stayed at my place) one particular knucklehead stood out from the rest of the group, that being George Tabb. Even before this, George had achieved some p-rock notoriety in another band based in FL, but that's another story. He was also in the short-lived Letch Patrol. Currently, George writes for the scene's church paper, Maximum R-N-R. Okay, so I'm rifling through the latest package from Lookout! Recs when I notice this CD EP and flip it over to see what's on it, when to my surprise there's ol' George's mug lookin' back at me. What a flashback! Admittedly curious, I pop the sucker in and what do I get? Silly pop-punk. Boy - what a let-down. I mean, I wasn't expecting anything like The Prophets, or even remotely close, but this? YEESH. George is one of the best people in the world you'd ever want to meet - a real prince - so it pains me to say that this EP is a waste of time, money, and plastic. Not funny, and not worth your gold. Sorry, George. (For you trivia mavens, Dee Dee Ramone sings back-up on the opening track, "Betty Crocker Punk Rocker" - maybe he jinxed it?) (Lookout!) N. Zebrowski.

DIAMANDA GALAS *Schrie* CD

The fact that this recording was sponsored by the NEA is more ironic than noteworthy. One play of this harrowing disc would undoubtedly lead any God-fearing room-mother to cover her children's ears and pray for poor Diamanda's demented soul. More than anything, these arrangements are loosely themed and barely musical blasphemies. Alternately quoting the Bible and spitting out such un-pious tomes as "Coitum" and "Vein," Diamanda's exploration of the more base human emotions / experiences comes off sounding like the soundtrack to a too realistic haunted house. Too bad Halloween's still 10 months away. (Mute) fike.

ARMANDO GARZON (with the Quinteto Oriente) *Boleros* CD

Cuba is virtually a cultural hell-hole. The demise of the Communist big-wigs tossed a wrench into Castro's machine and the whole country pays for it, even the musicians with only a black-market to acquire any musical supplies (strings, chords, drums). The only way for a musician to keep afloat is to play out of the country and/or play traditional Cuban music. Garzon hits both. A bolero is a dance in 3/4 time - these in particular are mambo-esque, cha-cha-like, slow moving, acoustic crooning. This disc is loaded with charm and tradition, and would fit perfectly for a wine and dine evening. Truly nice. (Corazon) Bryan Ramirez.

GEEZER LAKE *King Frost Parade* CD

Just imagine when Squirrelbait broke up, McMahon and Grubbs decided to go the conventional, grungy route instead of their respective paths. Something like Geezer Lake could've been born. Good or bad isn't the issue, it's the overall presentation of the hooks, mix, etc. Geezer Lake dabble in a lot of different ways to present their "thing." When they get mathematical, there is a lot to notice but little to grasp. When they chill out, that's where the magic sets in. Sometimes their cleverness makes them stumble. Yet, their redeeming qualities shine bright enough. (Thick) Bryan Ramirez.

GRACE *But if I Could Fly* CD

I really wanted to slam this CD. I really wanted to write something like: a better title for this CD would be "But If I Could Sing." But Grace pleasantly surprises me, because not only can the lead singer sing, the music is brilliant. With silky smooth vocals that beautifully fits the soaring, dance-oriented beat, Grace proves European dance music can be enjoyed off the dance floor. Credit goes to the immaculate production by Paul Oakenfield who puts the best Pet Shop Boyish rhythms to 90's techno influenced textures. The result is music that accomplishes to doing what the title suggests - it's sounds fly! (Reprise) Mike Pfeiffer.

GRIEF *Miserably Ever After* CD

Noisy, slow, grindcore. Lyrics written by someone who hates most people. The kind of person who yells at the TV during the news (I do it, too). It even comes complete with a Saint Vitus cover of "Angry Man." I don't get into this kind of stuff, so I'll leave it at that. (Theologian) David J. Ciancio

half string *a fascination with heights* CD

A nifty lil' 10 song CD, exquisitely packaged, of mellow indie-pop. Quiet, smooth and wonderful. Think of Luna, Codeine or Seam as points of reference. This is a "nice" record that makes the perfect choice for late nights or early Tuesday mornings. (Independent Project) N. Zebrowski.

Mike Henderson & the Bluebloods *First Blood* CD

A while back I reviewed a Henderson release that was some great country music. Henderson is back, but this time he got bit by the Memphis hip shaker bug. This fucker swings like a hurricane, and can get low down and dirty as a pair of shit-kickers. You know all those "Whitey" blues clubs that exist in each and every town...real digitized lame versions of standards...well, if this band were to invade one of those joints I'd guarantee the friction on the dance floor would send someone to the emergency ward. Watch out! This ain't for wimps. (Dead Reckoning) Bryan Ramirez.

HUMBLE GODZ

Hi Fi & The Roadburners *Wine Women & Sin* CD

Fast, furious, funny and vicious. That's one way to describe Hi Fi & the Roadburners' latest and greatest; a greasy garage party that rocks out till the wee hours. This "windy city" gang consists of Erik "Hi Fi" Kish on lead vocals and rhythm guitar, brother Hans on bass, Jeff Schuch on second lead guitar, Dan Curry on drums and Denis McQuinn blowin' down the house on sax. Everyone's voice gets heard on backing vocals, too. Trying to put these guys into a niche is tough; they're not blues, almost but not quite rockabilly - maybe a blue-collar cross between garage and swing. "Knock 'em Down, Drag 'em Out" is probably describing an auto shop soiree that got out of hand. "What the Hell Happened to the U.S.A." is a way cool ska (!) tune that stomps its black-booted aggression all over the foolish American political landscape with a honkin' sax and hook that's borrowed from Bobby Darin's "Sea Cruise." "Chi Town Hustler" and "Run, Johnny, Run" both have great melodies that meld unique sax lines and inventive guitar leads into a new hybrid rock monster. Track #5 is an aggressive instrumental that is pushed into overdrive by the timely yelps and barks of the motley chorus. "Bring It On Up - Turn It On High" sounds like it was recorded live at a booze-bar fest at 1:59 a.m. "Get Out of My Way" hits home with its hi-octane automotive sounds and the immortal driver's plight of encountering the slow driver in the fast lane who don't know where he's goin'! Bile burnin' social commentary and harsh, alcohol-etched howls lend a double dose of angst and energy to this collection of turgid tunes. These guys carry their "fuck you" attitude way out on their sleeves and don't seem to care if you agree with them or not. It may not get them an invitation to the Tonight Show, but it sure is a party I wouldn't wanna miss. (Victory) Del Villareal.

THE HOLMES BROTHERS *Promised Land* CD

Four-part gospel music is dead and I miss it all the time. Desperately, I turn to the TV or TBN or a local-access fever swamp preacher, but only Jimmy Swaggart gives me any relief, and he's not what he used to be. The rest of gospel music has gone the way of modern country music; mechanized, bland and soulless. Along come the Holmes Brothers with just enough of the old-time gospel sound to make me smile and think of my Granny frying homemade doughnuts whilst the kitchen radio sang the Lord's praises. Only a couple of the songs are religious, but that spirit-swelling stomp pervades all the tunes, including a heart-breaking cover of Tom Waits' "Train Song." My only reservation is the slow songs, which plod along. The rest is a rollicking bunch of fun. (Rounder) Scott Joyner.

HORNY TOAD *Thirteen* CD

It's kinda skunky, kinda funky. I'd almost lump it in with all the 311 / Sublime type stuff that's all over the radio these days, except I could actually listen to this once-in-awhile without my digestive tract reversing on me. Plus they do a cover of "She's A Brick----------House," which could be funkier, but you gotta love 'em for trying. (Domo) Mazzola.

HUMBLE GODS *No Heroes* CD

Let's be honest - Johnny Rotten's credibility sucks. In the wake of last year's No Money World Tour, the Pistols were equated with Kiss and punk gone dumpster-diving. Humble Gods seem bent on rescuing what remains of punk rock's old-school image problem. The pedigree is excellent; HG has alumni of The Descendents, Doggy Style, Dag Nasty and Pennywise. The formula is just as it was two decades ago: critical of society, apocalyptic, and shouted at full lung. "Glad I'm Not You" guns for the self-wrapped world of the American drone. *No Heroes* goes right for the throat of the three-letter organizations (CIA, IRS, SEC) and their "slave driven society." Punk spirit even flows from their cover of Tom Petty's "American Girl." Fans of Detroit's proudest export, the Insane Clown Posse, will appreciate their re-mix of HG's "Running Out of Time," tacked on the end for good measure. Overall, *No Heroes* is a worthy investment. I just can't shake this mental image of them beating the shit out of Green Day (Kerplunk!). (Hollywood) J. Verdusco.

I HATE MARS *Rosemary Flakes* CD

Detroit / E.L. band quite similar to Motown rockers Hoarse. The five songs on *Rosemary Flakes* are as catchy as the flu and out-n-out smoke! "Repairman" is one helluva song that should get mondo radio play. Plus this disc has that patented "Patalan sound" (Andy was tweeking the knobs on this one.) Quality licks, folks. (IHM) N. Zebrowski.

INSTANT GIRL ***Post Coital*** **CD**

Featuring ex-members of Spitboy (minus A. Droogas), Instant Girl dish out more radical feminist anthems than you could shake a stick at -- to the extreme -- sometimes a little too much! For example, "Euphemized" points out a dirty little word and how it is used to degrade and demean women: "What's the matter? Cat got your tongue?" Not all women will agree that "the words" themselves are the problem. The real issue here is how and where the words are used. I mean, even a lesbian in the film *Go Fish* admires the word "honeypot." The real issues brought up on this album deal with domestic violence, hate crimes and ethnic issues. Despite the music and its unpredictable abrasiveness, I mostly focused on the lyrics. Never underestimate the power of Karin, Todd and Dominique. They're not only going to rock your world, they're going to try to make it a better world for women to live in!!! (Allied) Shawn Wernette.

JOYSTICK ***Heavy Chevy*** **CD**

Very catchy pop punk a la NOFX with slightly retarded lyrics. From "Grand Band" :

Check this grand new band I'm in / Tunes are good
We're so jammin' / We're so rad, we drink beer.

Not the headiest lyrics, but Joystick is a little more melodic / sophomoric / enjoyable than most pop-punk bands, as there is absolutely no chance of these boys ever making dollar one. (Lobster) Pants Mulligan.

JUNE OF 44 ***The Anatomy Of Sharks*** **CD EP**

One of my favorite bands, June decided to do a one-off in between albums, apparently to give an idea of what's to come. The first track, "Sharks and Sailors," is an eleven-minute plus killer in typical June style, complete with stops, changes, and customary shouts. This style of song is what made me love the band. Next, we have "Boom," a trance/ambient kick drum covered by a scrawling trumpet. The feel of this one is similar to "I Get My Kicks For You," but still a major departure sound-wise. This kind of experimentation and new growth in music is really refreshing in an indie scene where redundancy is prized. The last song, "Steamer," combines some different elements together to make quite a song, but the vocals (Doug Scharin's?) just don't seem to cut it. No biggie. This is still one of the best records that will come out this year. (Quarterstick) mpayok.

KOMAKINO ***Energy Transmission*** **CD**

I don't know what Komakino stands for, but I'd like to think it means aggressively dazzling electronic dance music. "Outface (660 Mix)" opens *Energy Transmission* with a release of quick rhythms, set to trance music and a sample of "Give me a mother fucking break beat!" But don't write Komakino off as one of those mindless hardcore techno bands that play over 150 bpm and chant a juvenile boast. Komakino make the best of all electronic music's genres including mixing mad rave music with drum breaks and ambient textures. While electronic music fans wait impatiently for radio to catch up with us, Komakino is making an *Energy Transmission* that's demanding a deaf ear to listen. Put your ear next to the speaker and crank this to ten. (Hypnotic) Mike Pfeiffer.

Sleepy LaBeef ***I'll Never Lay This Guitar Down*** **CD**

His giant hollow body reverberating with the ghosts of "Mystery Train," Sleepy LaBeef raises the spirit of roots rock and rocking blues and makes it live within his massive frame, bending it to his will and bringing new life to authentic Americana. Legendary in his exploits, the "Big Man" does not just coast on his past adventures but gladly forges ahead with new inspiration and modern takes on classic rockabilly and blues. "Treat Me Like A Dog," one of his new songs, chugs along like a Sun original and "Roosevelt and Ira Lee" has got enough swamp rock boogie to make John Fogerty envious. Tracks like "Hillbilly Guitar Boogie" and Johnny Horton's "I'm Coming Home" verify that La Beef still can cut it with his "beefy" baritone and groovy guitar. Clever covers include Wayne Walker's "Little Boy Sad" and the barroom standard, "Little Old Wine Drinker Me." Always surrounding himself with excellent musicians, this time Sleepy brings along Lisa "the barefoot queen of rockabilly drums" Pankratz and the deft digits of Dave Keyes on 88's. Sleepy assembled a crack group and recorded music that truly stands out amongst the dreck that has been flung out upon commercial country radio. If rock-n'-blues are your meat and potatoes, then tie on a bib for this hearty course. Make it a point to catch him live, as his sets are Ramones-like in their pace and mileage. (Rounder) Del Villareal.

JIM LAUDERDALE ***Persimmons*** **CD**

No Depression, a great mag out of Seattle devoting itself to the country-side of music, said this disc was hum-drum. I disagree. Sure, it's lazy and relaxed, but Lauderdale turns that into some really good, catchy, Nashville-flavored ditties. Part stomp, part booze, part shuffle and a good mood, makes it all pretty damn good stuff. Emmylou Harris makes a sweetened appearance. Y'all can dig this real good. (Upstart) Bryan Ramirez.

Les Secretaries Volantes ***Thermoplastique*** **CD**

14 songs from these French-Canadian rockers. Les Secretaries Volantes have a garage / surf rock a la Rezillos sound. Not one bad song on this record! High end, no glitter guitars add a nice touch. Even though I can't understand one word of French, it is nice to hear something besides the boring English language. The two vocalists on this album are so energetic. One male, one female exchanging vocals with each other. These rockers completely blow away all other bands in the 90's who are trying to achieve the same sound. (Tir Groupe Disques) scott yahtzee.

LICKITY SPLIT ***Volume Won*** **CD**

Somewhere between 80's hardcore / power pop and 90's radio pop punk is where you'll find this disc. They come from the DC / Virginia area, and the vox are reminiscent of Minor Threat, while most of the music is this sort of Cali-punk stuff. ***Volume Won*** is a solid, but somewhat confusing intro to Lickity Split. (Double Deuce) fike.

LIKEHELL ***Snowball's Chance*** **CD**

A likable four-piece from the Twin Cities, the evidence of their hometown is apparent in the music. They could easily be an AmRep band, although the vocals are a bit more straightforward than most of that label's standbys. Some deep fuzz-tones and a hammer-away approach work well for these guys, but they fall a bit short in variety. The songs usually start on a great note, but there is seldom any change. There's just a bit too much riffing. This is not LikeHell's first record, and I haven't heard anything else to compare it to. Still, I'd call it a keeper. (Spanish Fly) mpayok.

LOIS

LOIS ***Snapshot Radio / Infinity Plus*** **CS**

Reminiscent of rainy days and sad puppy paintings, Lois plays mellow acoustic melodies perfect for the soundtrack of a good tearjerker. Sometimes on the brink of being too cute (with such titles as "Not Funny" and "Ha-Ha" that appear on both LPs), but never as bad as Juliana Hatfield on 78 speed a.k.a. normal speed (33 1/3). I think of Bettie Serveert without electric guitars crossed with Edie Brickell doing "Circle of Friends." My ex-girlfriend hates hardcore, so Lois comes in handy when it comes time for us to break out the bunny slippers and snuggle. I know she'll try to steal this! (K) Shawn Wernette.

LOVE HUSKIES ***Semi-Gloss*** **CD**

I like it. Not much to say here...I suppose if you're into the Afghan Whigs, give this a shot...definitely good enough that I'd consider buying it new. Best song on the album is "pop gun and emotional stitches." (Gotham) Durt 101.

THE LOW AND SWEET ORCHESTRA ***Goodbye To All That*** **CD**

Many people would raise a skeptical eyebrow to the "punk-rockers turned folk-troubadour" concept, but these guys pull it off with style and achieve a surprising degree of success. This seven-piece L.A. band, composed of alumni from such groups as the Circle Jerks, Pogues and Thelonious Monster, has set aside the raging noise of their electric instruments and replaced them with the more reserved sound of a largely acoustic ensemble of instruments, such as violin, cello, dobro and accordion (an unfairly maligned instrument which has yet to receive its due respect). It's all stirred together to create a sound that sits far away from the punk rock side of things, with a blend of folk, Celtic, country, blues and rock stylings that, musically, wrestle with one another and manage to come up with a nicely balanced whole. One of the members, Zander Schloss (formerly of the Circle Jerks) states, as an explanation of sorts for the musical transition that, "...The most punk thing you can do is expose your emotions, your sadness and joy. The edge lies not in the volume, but in the emotion." Nicely stated and, all-in-all, a nice summation of the appealing qualities of the disc. There are some undeniably snazzy hooks to wrap your ears around, and the acoustic / electric mix really is very well-balanced with a nicely swinging flow. Some of the lyrics and vocal delivery don't quite do it for me, as there seems to be a certain lack of that inherent, though very tangible charisma that vintage troubadours like Fred Neil or Jesse Winchester can loft into the air with their words. The vocalist, Mike Martt, sometimes seems to be struggling to wrap words and phrasing around the surrounding music although, for the most part, he does a fine job and does seem to be rather sincere about the whole business. A nice entry for these folks into the world of "quieter music," and a surprising near-hit from left field. (Interscope) Bryan Kay.

THE MARK OF CAIN ***Battlesick*** **CD**

This soldier stomp march from from Australia had been sitting on someone's shelf for a while, considering it was recorded in early '89. Yeah, it does represent that time period during that uprising of ruthless scuz rock, particularly in the U.S. and, well, Australia (meaning Feedtime). I bet this would've machine-gunned live, but in the studio it's too clean and lean. All the aggression is quite apparent, however. Sorta like a new-wavish blast first hand from the turn of the decade. This could be a gateway for those chugging industry bands before piercing got out of hand. Not that bad at all. (Thirsty Ear/2.13.61) Bryan Ramirez.

MASTER MECHANIC ***s/t*** **CD**

Impressive debut from a band I have seen live quite a few times. Good to hear that none of the live sound is lost on the recording. Hook for hook, these fellas fall short of the incredibly catchy Lee Harvey Oswald Band, but Master Mechanic mines the same veins at a different level, concentrating on a more primal instinct. Master Mechanic is not trying to out T-Rex T-Rex. Master Mechanic is Fanny (whose wonderful "Butterboy" they cover) x 10. This is the Lemon Pipers / 1910 Fruitgum Co. / Katzen-Katz (sp?) Circus playing "Green Tambourine" at 3 times the intensity, minus the sappy echo. (Sock-It) Pants Mulligan.

ELEANOR McEVOY ***What's Following Me?*** **CD**

This Irish lass has the aching passion and talent to be coherent in her challenges / inquisitiveness towards the powers that be. The chemistry used has worn out its welcome with way too many bands following this path of aggressive, jangle pop (10,000 Maniacs, Sinead O'Connor, etc.). 'Tis a lovely sounding disc, but nothing (except for "Sleepless") jumps out. McEvoy has nothing but time to develop. Maybe next time? (Columbia) Bryan Ramirez.

MENTAL INSECT *Two-Headed Fly* CD

Strange. One song is big guitar, arena rock, the next something you'd here at a trendy dance club. The arrangements (when discernible) ring of Bowie -- overly instrumental at times, but very smooth and somewhat predictable, giving them a "soft and easy" feel. German non-industrial dance-sounding stuff lapses into Greg Kihn cool. Just plain weird. Dedicated to the memory of Frank Zappa and Sunnyland Slim. You get the picture, don't you? (Pterandon Ltd. Editions) fike.

MILLENCOLIN *Life On A Plate* CD

Looks like these gentlemen from Sweden have studied their p-rock history books. At first listen, they conjure up visions of sweaty, California kids slam-dancing sometime around 1982. Further listens strengthen those images. Millencolin occasionally get into hard-rock and even ska interludes, but *Life On A Plate* is, for the most part, like a new Descendents album, but not...well...you know what I mean. What I'm really trying to say is, this is better than most of what you've heard / will be hearing from Epitaph / Fat Wreck / etc. (Epitaph / Burning Heart) fike.

MONKEY CHUCK *Going to Ben's* CD

I think that 5 years of living in East Lanisng and 3 years of being the Program Director at Impact 89FM has tainted my ears. One can only digest so much white boy soul/funk, jangly, college rock. Once you thrown in simple lyrics and hand claps, you have Monkey Chuck. The first 6 songs are about girls. Track 4 "Subaru" really could have been left off the CD. "In MY town there's a lot of empty streets. Full but empty if ya know what I mean. I'm an eyes peeled lookout with my feet on the floor. Ever since you cut my parachute cord. Is that your Subaru? I wonder. Is that your Subaru? Is it red? Is that your Subaru? I wonder. Is that your Subaru?..." The whole time I was listening to the CD I was saying to myself "This has to be a cover band." Then during the last track "Electric Frog Flexor" they break down into "Play That Funky Music." Wouldn't ya know it, the song was recorded live at the Small Planet. Maybe where I live in New Jersey isn't as bad as I thought. (New Brunswick --Bouncing Souls, Monster Magnet, Lifetime) (Yikes!) David J. Ciancio.

THE MONO MEN *10 Cool Ones* CD

First off, the standard for shitty covers of "Kick Out The Jams" has already been set by the Bad Brains featuring Henry Rollins on the *Pump Up The Volume* soundtrack back in '90...there is no reason for anyone to cover this song ever again. Other than that, this is a solid volume of covers and near-covers from a veteran band that was exploring the garage back when you were still diggin' Big Black...liner notes deny "significance" and encourage binge drinking; the band is all receding hairlines and beer bottles. Aren't you already in a band like this? (Scat) Fred Beldin.

Country Dick Montana *The Devil Lied To Me* CD

Country Dick Montana (a.k.a. Dan McLain), former "lead personality" and drummer for The Beat Farmers, a seminal '80's era, So-Cal roots-rock band, died while performing on stage at the Long Horn in Whistler, British Columbia, on Nov. 8th, 1995. This album was Dick's first solo project, completed just days before he was to enter the hospital for throat cancer surgery. He recovered from the operation and eventually hit the road with the Beat Farmers. *The Devil Lied To Me* has loads of genres and styles covered, but is plenty long at 19 cuts. Quite an ensemble was corralled for this effort, featuring Dave Alvin, Rosy Flores, John Doe, Candye Kane, & Mojo Nixon, plus it's a decent solo project. Some songs benefit from CD's scratchy bass vocals, while others would have best been left on the studio floor. Highlights include "I Wanted You To Know," a nice, sparse acoustic with a lilting harp, pretty vocal harmony and spooky whistling. The lamenting "Picture of You" would fit well on a Pogues' album. "Listen to Her Heart," a Tom Petty-penned rocker, moves along real cool-like and "Hurt By Love" is another bouncy number with Katy Moffat sharing vocal duties. One of my favorites was the Dean Martin tribute tune, "Party Dolls and Wine." This alcoholic anthem proves that Montana was into cocktail-lounge music way before it ever became trendy. A nifty, raunchy version of "Green Door" will make your eyes red and watery. Just as he lived his life, this testament to diversity shows how Dick never feared anything, and was willing to try almost anything once. They say the brightest flames burn briefest, and in this case it was true. Country Dick Montana was taken too soon, but at least he lived his life like he wanted to, with no compromises. Here's to you, man - hopefully you're somewhere comfortable, drinking a cold one and getting the last laugh at the devil! (Bar/None) Del Villarreal.

THOM MOORE *Spitting Sounds* CD

This anthology spans the career of Thom Moore from '91 to '95 with his three outfits: Orange Kate, Lord Escalator, and the Plumps. All three have the same element of Moore's song writing: they owe too much to the Robyn Hitchcock / Syd Barrett side of life. In fact it's overabundant and rather annoying. Included is the rolling Hitchcock verbiage with a hint of an actual British accent on certain words. The influence of Squeeze isn't ruled out. It's funny though, I have some friend that copied the Hitchcock schtick and wound up annoying everyone. (Deaf Khan) Bryan Ramirez.

VINNIE MOORE *Out Of Nowhere* CD

I'm not one to toot the horn of the guitar gods, i.e. Steve Vai, Satriani, ...(you get the picture), but it's hard not to recognize insane guitar playing. For anyone who has ever played the guitar seriously or dreamed of being the most perfect guitarist in the world, this album is for you. This is a completely instrumental album and is not for anyone who thinks Vai is ridiculous, or Satriani is overdone. Technically speaking, Vinnie Moore sets this CD on fire from beginning to end; he also manages to add some real nice emotion to this whole album. One nice thing on this album is the fact that he has written extensive liner notes explaining each song pretty well. I found myself listening to this album most while reading, it gives off a really nice background texture. (Mayhem) Tim Arnold.

MORCHEEBA

MORCHEEBA *Who Can You Trust?* CD

The two men that are the foundation of Morcheeba describe themselves as "trainspotting misfits from a very small town." Whether that makes them simply provincial Englishman or rabble-rousing junkies, I am unsure. Either way, the music Paul and Ross Godfrey make is flowing and ethereal. Some live drumming, blues guitar stylings, and synth programming are the gist of it. A string section ties up a few tracks as well as a Hammond and (everyone's favorite) a Moog. To a mainstream hip-hopper, it would sound like over-orchestrated jazz with a good drum beat. Enter Miss Skye Edwards, the voice of Morcheeba. She brings a club sensibility to the group. Her voice is a sensuous whisper that compliments the outer-realm acidics of the brothers Godfrey. The whole package plays out well and should be a hit with Ninja-Tune type acid jazz aficionados. Even though my preferences run to either straight jazz or hip-hop, I enjoyed "Who Can You Trust?" The first track, "Moog Island," and the title track are both memorable. "Trigger Hippie," their radio single, was the least ear-catching, and a bad pun, too. (Discovery) J. Verdusco.

MORGOTH *Feel Sorry For The Fanatic* CD

Firstly, I'd like to state that I absolutely hate the way Century Media writes all the promotional crap for their bands. Whoever they have in charge of that department is a pinhead and should be moved along. If I may quote: "*Feel Sorry For The Fanatic*, another daring leap that...entrenches them firmly within a musical scene whose listeners beg for upheaval and experimentation...and Morgoth are happy to oblige each and every one of them." Sounds kind of pompous to me. This could be a fairly enjoyable recording and I commend Morgoth for at least being a bit more tasteful than most of their peers left in the "thrash" (whatever) world. But it's hard for me not to let the pretentious spiel on the back ruin the whole effect. (Century Media) Mazzola.

BILL MORRISSEY *You'll Never Get To Heaven* CD

You like stories? There are 12 of them here; some told with healthy wit, some told with a heart full of pure sentiment. Of course there's the obligatory line that sticks out to circle your head as part of the "wisdom of the day." Bill Morrissey's voice has this trustworthy crackle that varies in a Steve Forbet / Leon Redbone / Tom Verlaine manner, which is the absolute pleasure of this very pleasurable folk release. Easygoing chug of acoustics with rat-a-tat percussion that span the Big Sky of Montana. I'm sure alone, live, he would be truly great. (Philo) Bryan Ramirez.

MORSEL *s/t* CD EP

Thick, layered denseness pushing against your cranium; this is slightly reminiscent of Live Skull with Thalia. Vocalist Miriam Cabrera interjects her thoughts and feelin's with a passionate intensity that will win over even the most jaded listeners. (Small Stone) D. Wood.

MY OWN VICTIM *No Voice, No Rights, No Freedom* CD

Question: What happens when hardcore leaves the East Coast? Answer: It becomes metal. That's not bad, that's just environment & exposure. If you like Downset or Biohazard, this Kentucky-based band is for you. Focused, angry lyrics over hardcore rhythms with razor edged guitar parts. Most songs are under 3:30 minutes, that's good. Short and to the point. Track 6 "Walls Apart" is the best place to start on this disc. Midwest, mid-school, metal/hardcore, with cool breakdowns & chants. It's worth a shot. (Century Media) David J. Ciancio

NEXT STEP UP *Fall From Grace* CD

I hear the bell toll the hour is late / my mind wanders through fits of hate. "Passive Aggression," *Fall From Grace*. The music is weak and the lyrics are cheesy / listening to *Fall From Grace* makes me queasy. (Gain Ground) Ryan Keberly.

THE NINES *Hi Fi Lo Mein* CD EP

The Nines play rock and roll. It's not quite formulaic, but maybe paint-by number. Let's just say they would feel at home locked in a room with Cheap Trick and Urge Overkill. Clocking at about 16 minutes, 6 songs. This is only a brief glimpse into The Nines' world. I do like it; at least half the songs match U.O. for catchiness. "My Baby Loves to Cry" is the best track on this list, but I wouldn't really write of The Nines before hearing a lot more material. (Clamarama) J. Verdusco.

NINETEEN WHEELS *Six Ways From Sunday* CD

Local Lansing lads enter a newer, bigger realm with their step up to Aware Records (a stepping stone label for a few current chart-toppers). Well, I said it once and I'll say it again, Nineteen Wheels are the only band to really give a damn about from the Aware roster. Here's the proof: A truly great new disc is finally available to those concerned. Cynics may be surprised. Consider this if you've been snagged by the whole abrasive country explosion made popular by...you know what bands I'm talkin' about. What we have here that gives this disc high marks are the vitals: great song writing, playing and production. It reels, rocks, then sways tipping the hat to the Reivers, Mr. Tweedy, what's-his-name Westerberg, earthy contentment, broken-down barns and barstools, whiskey at 4 am, then boy-goes-a-courtin' at sunrise. Put this in rotation with Petty's "Wild Flowers," Neil's "Harvest Moon" or Wilco's "Being There." Trust me, it all fits. Very excellent job, lads. (Aware) Bryan Ramirez.

NOBODY'S BUSINESS *Waykool Rock and Roll* CD

Detroit (and Michigan) can add another satisfying notch to its musical belt with the release of this great rockin' CD. While it does have its shortcomings (not many), overall this package pleases, and it's about damn time a Detroit band put out a full-length rock-a-billy album! Produced by Stray Cat-man Lee Rocker and assisted by guests Artie Wolff and George Canterbury, Bill, Chris, Rudy play like, well, ...like nobody's business! "Love My Baby" has all the right stuff for a classic rock-a-billy number; snappy drum work by Chris Georgio, solid bass tuggin' by Rudy Kowalski and hot pickin' by Bill Georgio. Track #2 has a Beatles/Mersey-beat feel to it while "Baja Baby" is a somewhat soggy surf-a-billy number. The title track, "Waykool Rock and Roll," is an excellent strolling bopper with some nifty guitar work by leadman Bill. "Love My Baby" truly rocks with an infectious hook that sends my feet flying fast! Eddie Fontaine's "Nothin' Shakin" is a fair cover but lacks the playful hillbilly spirit of the original, and I could have lived without the lethargic "Buddy-O." "So Hard To Get Along" is an excellent dark, moody twang-ster piece that reminds me of a Chris Isaak track, and "Go Cat Go" is a real gone, quick and crazy song - one I'll be featuring in my radio show often! At times the production is a little slick or murky, but that in no way detracts from the fun and enthusiasm this mature trio emanates. Next time I hope they'll do some car tunes - they are from the Motor City fer cryin' out loud! Check out these cats locally - it's worthwhile. Del Villareal.

OBLIVIANS *Popular Favorites* CD

Man, this thing ROCKS! The difference between this album and their last lies in the fact that they've actually learned to play (kind of...which they've admitted). The Oblivians exist to cram LOUD rock and roll down into the deepest crevices of your audio receptors. They've actually found a John Lee groove on this album, and they work it to death with distortion. "Do The Milkshake" sounds a hell of a lot like a "Boogie Chillin'" rip-off, but then again, you can't rip-off the blues, man...it's all the same, and the Oblivians pull off a loud obnoxious version of the most raucous rockin' noise being put out there, even for Crypt Records' lame-ass standards today. If nothing else, buy the album at least to hear "Guitar Shop Asshole." The Oblivians turned your popular favorite I IV V chord progressions into a psychotic smokin' rock and roll explosion. Buy it. (Crypt) Davis.

THE 1-4-5'S *Rock Invasion* CD

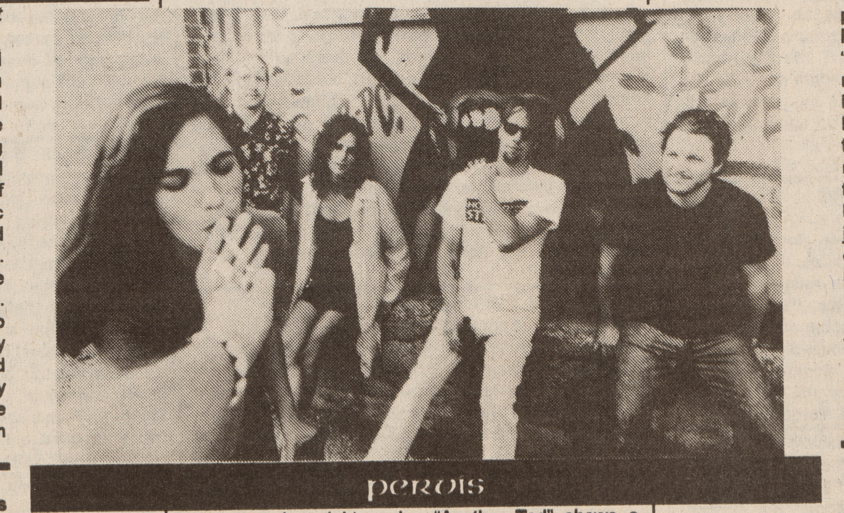
Lo-Skill High Energy Rock and Roll. Every track has the word "rock" in it (I Like to Rock, This is how you Rock, That Ain't no Rock, Rickety Rickety Rock, etc.). Includes an insert requesting a (long overdue) mandatory protective helmet law for rock bands. (Estrus) Pants Mulligan.

SHAQUILLE O'NEAL *You Can't Stop The Reign* CD

Shaq does another rap deal, his third in fact. Well? What would you expect? By all means, it does hold the weight to be in the same league with the big-timers. But, do you dig the state of rap these days? Total slow, bump-n-grind booty patrol stuff that is as rhythmic as any pelvic thrust. Rappers dibs on cheeba and pussy, pussy, pussy! Truly tiring. Shaq is on the positive tip which the youth need to grasp. Good for Shaq. It's hard to get past the mellow thump that is elemental in just about in every fuckin' rap release. Gimme the rapid fire P.E. / Ice T beats any day, any time. Leave the hump jam on the shelf. (T.W.Is.M / Interscope) Bryan Ramirez.

OVERDOSE *Scars* CD

Heavy, heavy Sepultura influence is painfully obvious and while that may please a skirt chaser like Mike Mazzola, it might leave some of you with a ring around the collar. Saw this band open for Mercyful Fate last fall and after listening to this, I'm still not convinced they have anything more than a flair for bongos. Brazilians...wasn't Pampero Firpo Brazilian? (Fierce Recordings) D. Wood.



PEACH OF IMMORALITY *Talking Heads 77* CD
TO LIVE AND SHAVE IN L.A. *Vedder Vedder Bed Wetter* CD
TO LIVE AND SHAVE IN L.A. *Helen Butte Vs. Masonna Pussy Badsmell* CD

Tom Smith has been a total pain for the past 10 years. It's pointless to go into it. Smith had an outfit back in the 80's titled Peach Of Immorality and this CD presents a weird manipulation of sound through samples of records, weird guitar shit and God-knows-what. Very minimal, but pretty cool for its consistency. Or maybe it's free-form inconsistency? Sounds like a machine with a mind of its own. To Live And Shave In L.A. is Smith's new thing. ***Vedder Vedder...*** just plain sucks hard. It's a bad version of "Hijokaidan" and "Masonna." A lot goes on, but its spaciousness leaves it too open and distinguishable to be confusing. It sounds like a couple of guys messing around in a studio. ***Helen Butte...*** fares a bit better, but not much. Still in the same vein, but it sounds more retarded. The sound manipulation does get a bit edgy and it is schizo, but one would think after all the years that Smith has been toying in this field, that he would develop something more extreme than this Tasmanian Devil blurb. I don't know, Roger from Macronymphia says the Japanese are beating us at our noise game. 'Tis true. Mr. Smith, you may forward your hate mail to me in care of this magazine. (Fused Coil) Bryan Ramirez.

PEN PAL *Best Boy* CD

Alterna-pop, typical and forgettable - reminiscent of maybe The Lemonheads if they had been sucked on for a while, spit out and rolled around in pocket fuzz. These guys are kind of like Snuffleupagus as well: mostly invisible to the outside world, often confused and dejected. I think they might be shooting for a cynical edge, but it doesn't come through. The music is not quite listenable - sadly, there's obvious talent buried in these artists - they just aren't letting it to the forefront. The intros to a number of tracks are appealing, but after the first few measures fall back into the same pattern. The vocals are pretty powerless and flat, but it could be construed as part of their intentional style, and how much sense does that make? Toothless sarcasm - forget it. (Evil Teen) Beth M.

PERVIS *Neck Or Nothing* CD

Lead singers Rachel Strauss and Christina Harrison have got us right where they want us. Two female singers to make everything sound angrier, dirtier and twisted is just what we all needed. Did I mention they pack one heck of an attitude? Being aggressive is Pervis's specialty. The flamboyant first track, "Vitamin C," features mile-a-minute guitars and raunchy vocals. Rachel and Christina's voices combine well and create their own different sound. Pervis crosses a fine line between punk and slowed-down metal. Most of these songs are downright punk. "Another Ted" shows a girl's angry point-of-view in dealing with a stalker. "You psycho fucker / Might have to shoot you!" is screamed back and forth between Rachel and Christina. "Choking On The Monster" sounds a little too 80-ish metal. "Dying Superstition" is a favorable, straight-at-you, punk-metal tune. Complicated well by a brilliant bass line, "Dying Superstition" is probably the best song on this album. I guess my problem with Pervis is: Are they punk or metal? Not that I'm complaining; this disc is very good. I guess with two singers though, they must have problems making decisions. (Idol) Chris Wardell.

WALLY PLEASANT *Wally World* CD

If you don't know Wally Pleasant yet, you're missing out on some of the most fun, quirky, and unique stuff since those glowing rubber spiders that stick to the wall when you throw them and then crawl down head over heels. (What? You don't remember those? Well, what can I say - Wally puts them to shame...) With this fourth CD, he continues to craft amusing little gems of everyday irony while keeping it simple and unpretentious. There's a few more backing players on this than earlier releases (basically one off-key guy and an acoustic guitar), which allow him a few unusual flourishes here and there. "Hardcore Man" is a great tribute / slam to Rollins, and "The Ballad of Ty Cobb" and "I Want A Stalker" speak for themselves. Fresh material in the tried and true Pleasant tradition: "Imagine that, I'm talking about revolution here, can-ya-dig-it?" (Miranda) Beth M.

PLEXI *s/t* CD

I sense a sort of self-righteousness here that doesn't bother me. The three guys in Plexi seem to have their ducks in a row. They have all the noise and dissonance you might expect from an older AmRep band and the rhythmic orientation of Gang Of Four or Wire. All this they manage to wrap up into a cohesive hard-rock, maybe even "alternative" group of songs. You can tell they are from L.A. , from the sparse Kodalith (black & white only) photography. Actually, there seems to be a lot of gray area with Plexi though, there are a number of directions they could go. Whatever they choose, this six song platter deserves your attention. (Boy's Life) fike.

DAVID POE *Glass Suit* CD EP

This was handed to me with a snicker, 'cause of the presence of Sim Cain (Rollins Band I believe). Ye need not judge this on that basis because this is a tasteful acoustic treat with Cain sticking to the brushes and John Abbey sticking to the stand-up bass, giving *Glass Suit* a minimalist, jazzy shuffle. Poe is a great songwriter, full of catchy hooks and expressing a ton of emotion. Unfortunately, there's only six songs. This is really good. (7 Twenty) Bryan Ramirez.

POISON *Greatest Hits 1986-1996* CD

Collected from five albums of some of the most meaningless, empty-headed pop music ever foisted upon the poofy-haired mall workers who made up the core of this "band's" fan base. Yeah, all the hits are on this new collection, "Nothin' But A Good Time," "Talk Dirty To Me," and even my personal fave, "Unskinny Bop." Receiving an endorsement from "Buffalo Tom" Oberlin, who will regale you with tales of seeing Poison live if he's prompted, there hasn't been a bigger waste of time to come across my desk in months. This is the kind of music that Richard Bowser (former ETCH contributor, WIDR disc jockey and all around swell guy, ed.) contemplates whilst on the bowl, although he'll try and deny it. But don't let him. He's a Poison fan all the way, and you won't have to dig too far in his expansive record collection before you'll uncover his prized copy of *Look What The Cat Dragged In*. (Capitol) D. Wood.

PONY *El Dorado* CD

Pony hit so many different points of expression, that you'd swear it was a compilation. Individually attacking Superchunk / J. Lizard / Unrest, from lo-fi to big studio sound, manipulating it sometimes, as this loose wire of the reality connection. This schitzo has very little boundaries and resists pigeonholing of any kind. It's limitless, high strung and very effective. (Homestead) Bryan Ramirez.

THE PRESCRIPTIONS ... *Pleasure's New Sound* CD

This one's a monster! Imagine if those wacky lil' Deal Sisters decided to put out a rock record and you'd get this gem. The tunes herein are catchy, memorable and rock. I defy anyone not to find themselves humming "Disassembled" after hearing it. Laura Ann, I need a stronger fix! N. Zebrowski.

THE PRESIDENTS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA *II* CD

I know this band only from that annoying "Peaches" song that was all over the radio like a phlegmmy chest cold for what seemed an eternity. But after spending some of my valuable time with their latest release, I can confirm what I suspected about P of USA...they suck. The best it gets is track three, "Volcano," which manages to kick up some dust, but this is a listless little nipper that will be filling the used bins of record outlets nationwide. Way too preppy and happy and zippy and skippy for the likes of me, too much sugar CAN be a bad thing. I believe PUSA's 15 minutes may soon be up, and as the knife swingin' Larry Lifeless once said, "Answer the call." (Columbia) D. Wood.

PULLEY *Esteem Driven Engine* CD

Another fine Epitaph release that everyone oughta consider, without the press materials this kinda thing is difficult but lemme try. This band is made up of former members of face to face and Straight Ahead and maybe a coupla' others. Straight forward mid-tempo punk that comes from Southern California, but doesn't necessarily bear the usual similarities. Less poppy, more punky. It's at the top of my stack and has been since I got it. (Epitaph) D. Wood.

THE QUEERS *Don't Back Down* CD

Have you ever pondered what the Beach Boys would sound like with distorted guitars? Well, your prayers have been answered. 14 forgettable songs that are perfect for waxin' down your surfboard and cruising around in your deuce coupe. I wonder if any of The Queers will go wacko like Brian Wilson did? (Lookout!) Ryan Keberly.

RICHMOND FONTAINE *Safety* CD

Country-based alternative rock-n-roll, a genre that I am not well-versed in at all, seems to have taken over indie-pop as the flavor of the month, or at least that's the impression one gets when perusing alterna-zines. As I said, I don't know the music from Adam, but Richmond Fontaine have got themselves a humdinger. 12 songs with a common theme running throughout; human nature, how people act, what they do - stories of the everyman or woman out there. The lyrics tell the story, but it is the music which makes the words haunting. The melodies stick in your head long after hearing them (the best example being the title track "Safety"), and keep coming back over the course of an afternoon, causing you to give it one more listen when you get home. This CD has gotten into my regular rotation and stayed there for over a month now. It's like your favorite pair of blue jeans - gets more comfy with every wash. I could keep jabbering on about this disc, but that would cut into my listening time. (Cravedog/Dancecard) Norman Zebrowski.

ROADSIDE MONUMENT *Beside This Brief Hexagonal* CD

Douglas Lorig, guitarist / singer for Roadside Monument, describes their music as "a beautiful mess...for lack of a better term." This music is droning and pushes through highs and lows; the lyrics are poetic and repetitious. They deny being art fag music, but I cannot see the distinction. Admittedly, they don't sound like every other band from Seattle, but great innovators they aren't. I guess RM is just too deep for me to understand. (Tooth & Nail) J. Verdusco.

Vincent Ruby's *Big Screaming Neurotic Head* CD

When I was in high school, I listened to rock & roll. If I wanted to listen to it now, I wouldn't find it in a sea of alternative, punk, grunge, pop, hardcore, rap & post-metal. Vincent Ruby is going to be one of the people who leads it back around. Saucy-funky-raunchy guitar rock. Any fans of King's X, Ted Nugent or Stevie Salas look here. It is obvious that Mr. Ruby and crew are professionals via well written songs with riffs, hooks, melodies, good time changes, backing vocals & good production. Highlights include #4 "Big Brother", #6 "Hard Times", & #7 "Orgasm." However, by far the best song is #9, "U.R.N. Asshole." It has a sample from "Back to the Future." (Big Al Duke) David J. Ciancio.

SAMAEL *Passage* CD

I'll bet this is what Big Black would sound like today if Albini hadn't cut it loose. I guess he is a smart guy after all. (Century Media) Bryan Ramirez.

SCARED OF CHAKA *Masonic Youth* CD

Scared Of Chaka sounds like what might happen if Weezer and some old-school punk band got together and went bowling. My initial hearing of the lead singer's voice was reminiscent of the Weezer guy. But Buddy Holly aside, pure power-pop punk is what you get on *Masonic Youth*. Energetic, fast and even cries of old school punk surface out of Scared Of Chaka. Most of the songs clock in under two-minutes, so you may want to listen to this disc carefully. If you leave the room, it may be over when you get back. This trio pumps out a whirlwind of catchy, fast tunes. One bonus is the vocals are shared between bass player Dameon and guitarist Yanul. Sharing vocals is kind of a lost art in music today, so it's a refreshing change. Similarities to Fugazi can be drawn, but take away the anger. Scared Of Chaka provides a different perspective to the doldrums of 90's alternative punk. Old school punk fans may want to snatch this jewel up. After listening to this disc, I see no reason why anyone should be Scared Of Chaka. (eMpTy) Chris Wardell.

SCENIC *Acquatica* CD

I recommend this CD for any long road trip you plan on taking in the future. Scenic play sprawling instrumentals with a noir-western feel to them. Included on *Acquatica* are bits of harmonica, horns, and strings, and also natural sounds like crickets and wood burning. The few duds on here, such as "The Ionic Curve" and the title track, seem like tedious sound exercises that luckily last only a few minutes. However, most of the material on *Acquatica* creates brilliantly soaring sound-scapes that take the listener on a journey through hot and dangerous territory. (World Domination) Mike Pfeiffer.

SCREW 32 *Under the Influence of Bad People* CD
BRACKET *"E" is for Everything on Fat Wreck Chords* CD

Okay, all of you Fat Wreck naysayers out there (you know who you are) can all bite your tongues with these two releases. Neither disc has the so-called "Fat Wreck sound." These aren't lil' pop punk ditties. In fact, they're very far removed from that scene. Screw 32 is plain, old-fashioned p-rawk, nothing else. You get anger and angst in spades, with the music as tough as the lyrics. These boys don't know what "subtle" means and it shows. Bracket, on the other hand, come at you directly out of left-field. There's a hint of ponk, but there's also a lot of quirk-pop. Eclectic would be the adjective best used to describe this release. Songs jump the tracks all over the place, going through a multitude of styles / genres by disc's end. This quartet's list of influences would undoubtedly make for interesting reading. On top of the quirky music and arrangements, the these gents add the following instruments to the mix: organ, trumpet, piano, oboe, tenor sax, cello and violin. I was expecting something completely different and took one right between the eyes. Two impressive releases for Fat Wreck Chords, with the Bracket CD being one of the coolest things I've heard in a long time. (Fat Wreck Chords) N. Zebrowski.

SCROAT BELLY *Daddy's Farm* CD

At face value, Scroat Belly mine the same coal as countless one-note hillbilly punk jokesters... we get Bible-thumpin' gin-guzzlin' grandmaws, pistol-wavin' sister-chasin' crackers, farm animal antics, and related themes. What first suggests *Daddy's Farm* is something more than wise guy class warfare (white trash Americans as scapegoat) is its status as Concept Album...what clinches it the fact that Scroat Belly scorch with such energy and taste that no other considerations matter. The band transcends their own joke with breakneck rock that gallops over traditional country forms and punk rock textures with style and love. As *Daddy's Farm* progresses, the hurricane tempos are relieved by the occasional jazzy interlude or classic rock turn, but the undeniable high spot is "The Booze Won't Let Me Down," a classic country weeper that proves Scroat Belly can twang as fiercely as they rock. (Bloodshot) Fred Beldin.

THE SELECTER *Back Out On The Streets* CD

If you were to walk into the Bamboo Lounge at your local Holiday Inn on Calypso-Reggae-Carribean night, this is what you might expect to hear. A band that knew what they were doing and conversed genially with the audience, whether they got a response or not. A band whose covers sound better than their originals. "The Whisper," "Sweet Dreams" (called "Wet Dream" here) and "Murder" stand out. The originals, "Die Happy" and "Hairspray" (both off of their last LP *Hairspray*) are okay too, but I think track five best sums up where the once mighty Selecter are at this stage in their career. (Triple X) fike.

SENTENCED *Down* CD

Gothic Metal has grown up quite a bit in the past few years and a lot of Death Metal bands are chilling out and joining the genre. Even Type-O is finally getting the mainstream respect they have always deserved. Finland's Sentenced has changed quite a bit since the last album, *Love and Death*, the bands new singer Ville Valhiala has put the band on the same level as Moonspell's recent album or goth giant Paradise Lost. Unfortunately, Sentenced lacks the emotion of Paradise Lost or the innovative streak of Moonspell. *Down* is essentially a good Goth Metal album, it will be cool to see how these guys evolve or if they evolve. (Century Media) Tim Arnold.

TUPAC SHAKUR *Makaveli* CD

It's bizarre writing about a CD that is currently on the top ten chart while its main architect is living in an alternate world. But, as always with Tupac you know what you're getting - a variety of gangsta licks and his familiar, effortless flow. His first posthumous release, *Makaveli*, doesn't really differentiate itself from Pac's earlier shit. Although a huge chunk of the production is infectious and smooth, it is unfortunately dripping with some of the same old cliché tracks (i.e. Posse cut, Diss cut - for Mobb Deep and members of the firm click, Party cut, etc.) Just like the two letters in the title MC there are two important parts to a dope MC: the delivery and the pearls they're droppin'. *Makaveli* is nothing new, but a perfect fit for a Tupac fan's CD collection. (Death Row) Chris Bass.

SHEEP ON DRUGS *One For The Money* CD

The Sheep sound like black leather, the snap of a whip, the slapping of flesh-on-flesh, sex, sex, SEX. "Songs to Dominate Your Lover To." Their first new(?!?...I know there's some older ones, but I'm assuming most are new) songs for Invisible after last year's re-release of two EPs, the savage bpm rates will keep those bodies moving. And I don't mean just dancing, although there's that too. Its often a challenge to make a dance record that is listenable outside of an exxstasy-filled club, but the Sheep manage to destroy normal expectations, along with all imaginable standards of family values. So call your significant other, buy a strobe light, and kick it. But remember to stay safe. I'm sure the Sheep would want you to. (Invisible) mpayok.

SILVER JEWS *The Natural Bridge* CD

The Silver Jews are a band I'd consider glamorous in the real sense: loneliness is glamorous, simplicity is glamorous, living the life on a farm is incredibly glamorous, just like J. Richman, Cohen and V.U. are glamorous, they just didn't know it and I'd agree the Silver Jews don't know it either. Rather than rant on and attempt to "deface" a word, this moves as fast as a Palace release, and has enough passion for Nick Drake. Somber, honest, and very lonely are the elements for this ill-at-ease release that makes each listen worthwhile. The music is pretty much straight forward 4/4 and borders on the Creedence strum-drum frame of mind and folk-out look. How do you like glamour now? (Drag City) Bryan Ramirez.

SIMKEN HEIGHTS *Religion of the Beast* CS

Ass kicking full-length from Lansing's Simken Heights; talking about bongs and seeds and generally messin' some shit up. Matter of fact, my favorite is a mind warper called "Fire Walk With Tha' Seedhead." It's all about the beats though, and this well produced cassette has got 'em. Heavily influenced by the Insane Clown Posse (I.C.P.) and E-Sham the Unholy, with maybe even a lil' NATAS in there, Mass and Cap-1 got it goin' on and I'll be g-damned if this ain't one of the best things to come out of Lansing in a long while. (KMC) D. Wood.

SISSY BAR *Statutory Grape* CD

Happy happy, joy joy, making life a little bit easier for the Angry Youth. Sonic happiness and pure sunshine for everybody is what Sissy Bar is trying to accomplish. They are not your average, everyday band. Don't worry though, they work hard to achieve this. Happiness equals goofiness on *Statutory Grape*. Don't throw this disc in to hear any angst-fueled rock, because disappointment is what you'll receive. Lead singer Joy has a beautiful voice and drives these fun happy anthems. "Bald Man Be Free" engages and sucks you into a trance state of mind. Banjo's, turntables, keyboards and Moog's are all present in Sissy Bar's wackiness. "Magic Bunny" sounds like a possible cartoon theme song. Picture a "Barney-type" bunny hopping around with kids, while enjoying this song. You'll see my point. Some of these songs get too zany. "Why? (The Bowling Ball Song)" ends with a blood-curdling scream. All this after two minutes of sugar-coated madness. Note of interest is the slap-in-the-face cover of Snoop Doggy Dogg's "Gin And Juice." Sissy Bar's take on rap may induce a chuckle or two from the masses, but not even Snoop Dogg deserves this much! (Sugar Fix) Chris Wardell.

SKINHORSE *Heavy Beats, Deep Grooves* CD EP

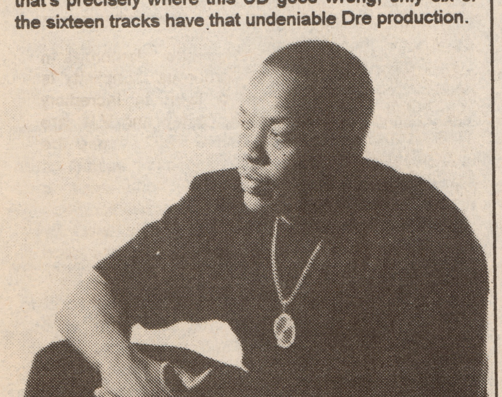
Mostly generic industrio groove thang with the exceptional track #3, "Give It To Me," standing out like a smashed thumb. Big booming clangy metallic dance music served in a dirty bucket. (Static) D. Wood.

Smart Brown Handbag *Monkey In The Middle* CD

If you dig the idea of Hootie & the Blowfish jamming with the Gin Blossoms, then go buy this right now. (I hear they still have copies at Musicland). (Stonegarden) fike.

SNOOP DOGGY DOGG *The Doggfather* CD
V/A *Dr. Dre Presents "The Aftermath"* CD

Gangsta's come a long way since the days of "The Chronic," as a genre it's pretty much deceased, especially since the murder of Tupac Shakur. While Death Row Records' CEO Marion "Suge" Knight sits in prison with the blood of Tupac all over his hands, the label's future is certainly shaky at best. Andre "Dr. Dre" Young, the real genius behind most of the success the label had, took the death of Shakur and the recent "East Coast / West Coast" conflict to heart and had the good sense to walk away from the empire which he helped to build. Taking the high road turned out to be the right thing, and to this day Knight remains silent and unwilling to help the police find Shakur's killer by giving them information crucial to the case. So Dre splits off from Knight and Snoop Dogg, developing his own roster of stars and that's what *The Aftermath* is all about. Giving artists like Mel-Man, RBX, Kim Summerson, Jheryl Lockhart, Sharief, Hands On and Group Therapy a chance to shine and letting Dr. Dre lend his expert production to give the beats the proper "oomph." But that's precisely where this CD goes wrong, only six of the sixteen tracks have that undeniable Dre production. The rest are produced by fellow homies like Bud'da, Stu-B-Doo and Flossy P and those songs kinda fall flat. The good stuff is abundant enough to make this one worth the effort, though, and KRS-1, along with B-Real from Cypress Hill, join in the fun on Group Therapy's "East Coast/West Coast Killers," which is one of the disc's true highlights. It's too bad that Snoop Doggy Dogg didn't take more time off to play with his kid Spanky because ***The Doggfather*** is a big time let down. Gone is all of the freshness of *The Chronic* and *Doggystyle*, and what we're left with is the same old tired raps. The only bright spots on ***The Doggfather*** are the re-working of the Biz Markie classic "The Vapors" and "Snoop's Upside Your Head." It's a dull, over-extended outing for sure, some tough editing choices would have been more appropriate. When Snoop says in his bio that he wants to be remembered for "having the seriousness of Malcolm X and the peacefulness of Martin Luther King," you just wanna vomit. He even has the gall to dedicate this to Tupac. Wonder if Phillip Waldemariam is rolling over in his grave somewhere? (Interscope) (Death Row / Interscope) D. Wood.


DR. DRE

SNFU *Fyulaba* CD

Rapid-fire social commentary from the Great White North's seminal punk quintet, SNFU. Their third Epitaph release, ***Fyulaba***, tackles issues such as divorce ("Stepstranger"), suicide ("Fate") and media-induced bulimia ("You Make Me Thick"). SNFU have been playing the best of the best since 1984 - listening to ***Fyulaba*** makes me wish I paid closer attention all those years ago. (Epitaph) Ryan Keberly.

SNUFF *Snuff Said...* CD

Well, those wacky British knuckleheads are back! This time we get 19 punk ditties (including a couple covers). As always, the music is well-played and produced, with the guitars and drums coming through crystal clear. Very old-school style Oi! that sounds best when cranked loud. This is a quality punk rock record from a quality punk rock band. Aces! (Fat) N. Zebrowski.

SOUL-JUNK *1953 /1954* CD

A couple of weeks ago, I was hangin' with a good friend of mine and brought up Soul-Junk in the conversation. "Eeehhhh," was his comment, adding that he believes he's not sure the whole Christianity thing is all that believable, or is maybe just schtick (and also that it sounds like Beck). Well, granted, the groove is there, but Beck's not a practicing Christian. "I think what Glen Galloway is doing is a form of rebellion," I said. He seemed somewhat shocked: "How?" First of all, who in their right mind would have such devotion from something that has become self-tainted? Galloway goes beyond that and straight to the Good Book itself - quoting it in almost every song, pretty gutsy. Consider it not an invasion, but an offering. Galloway isn't trying to save anyone, he's just some in tune guy who actually sings praises to those "above." And it just so happens that he did it in a studio, and it just happens to be on disc, which just happened to be sent to ETCH for me to review and it just so happens that Soul-Junk are one of my favorite bands. What do you know, almost exactly one year after the masterful *1952*. The chemistry stays steady with more of that garbled guitar-chop avant funky stomp, and a lot less free form. The song writing sounds drugged out and borderline relentless, yet it's catchy and fantastic. Wobbled guitars dart in and out of this sluggish stream of a tar pit muse that holds Galloway's podium together with strings, yarn and foreign debris. Yet it's strong and undeniable. How can one deny a man with such a strong faith and belief in bringing the elements of Christianity and this...weird rock music together? I don't know what to call this "thing" that I have for Soul-Junk. Admiration? Soul-Junk proves that anything is possible and have the brains to actually back it up. The act of bringing those two "controversial" elements (God / Music) together in the format presented is true rebellion. What would you honestly call it? Homestead has guts to continuously release this stuff, more power to y'all! Call it what you will. But I'll call ***1953 / 1954*** (***1954*** is a bonus disk for the first 2000 pressed) equally absolute brilliant releases. It's tried and true, a buffed gem that could only suffer discriminately. True genius work. (Homestead) Bryan Ramirez.

SPAZBOY *Bladow!* CD

By looking at the cover you would automatically think "Kerplunk", but no! This is no Green Day Album! This is two minute bangbangdelicious crappy go lucky pr that has absolutely no meaning and no affect on your life whatsoever. Honorable mentions for semi-cool songs on the album: "The Night Shannon Hoon Died," "Lately," and "Walking on Sunshine" (yes the cover). To me, it seems like three or four guys got together and decided to mess around for 30 minutes while recording their CD...and that's fine, if this is what you're looking for, but between you and me, I'd save the money and buy a NOFX album over this anyday. (Immune) Durt 101.

SPEEDBALL *Drive Like Hell* CD

My favorite gear jammers return with this teaser, following up their landmark, *Do Unto Others, Then Split*, nicely, thank you very much. You get three new ones and three live tracks, including "All Screwed Up," "See How They Run," and "Ass, Gas or Grass." It's the new material that really shines through and Speedball continue to be the real deal; how and why they're not bigger n' Jesus is way beyond my mind's eye...but anyhoo. "All These Things" features a little more texture to the sound than anything previous. The title track, "Drive Like Hell" is a phat example of what you need to be blastin' as your heading down the ol' highway. Molten lava boogie is what we've come to expect from Michigan's finest export, and this all-too-short piece o' scooda pie is as tasty as the sweat off Christy Canyon's nips. And why the fuck mess with the fantasy? (Energy) D. Wood.

SPEED DUSTER *Quick and Painless* CD

Quick and Painless is the freshman full-length from this Chicago quartet. It collects the band's indie releases from the last two years with a handful of new tracks. The disk opens strong with "Last Stop, Motor City" and doesn't let up. High-energy "Dirt Rock" sums up the method of SD's delivery. "Lone Star" leaves the listener wondering if these are really Illinois boys, or if they were reared closer to the Rio Grande. Todd Hartman's gravel voice was made for twangy music. "Blame It On The Whiskey" slows it down for a fire-water lament, showing off Hartman's style. Speed Duster are tight in their own barroom country mode. Finally, a band that deserves your money. (Fuse) J. Verdusco.

Jon Spencer Blues Explosion *Now I Got Worry* CD

What, Spencer Worry? I'll tell you what man, I don't care how big this man's head swells, I'll always continue to buy his records and support the cause, as I always have through Pussy Galore to the Gibson Brothers to Boss Hog to the Honeymoon Killers and all the side projects Spencer has been involved in. He's continued to put out the best quality rock, and this semi-major label debut is no exception. Spencer and Co. caught a little flak for their last album from the Pussy Galore Jesuits as being a bit slick, a result of too much production and Russell Simins getting hit over the head one too many times with the funk bat. A guest appearance by MTV's poster boy Beck probably didn't ease the pain for those indier-than-thou jerks, but the album did well and sounded great, so who expected Spencer to take the leap backwards towards a rawer, trash sound on the most recent excursion? It sounds like it came through a $20,000 mixer and a trash can at the same time. There's a serious dichotomy going on here. New and old fans will find something to like. The Dub Narcotic cover and Spencer's art-cut-and-paste piece "Sticky" can be considered the only possible throw-aways. The rest of the album just plain smokes in the *Crypt Style* vein. Do yourself a favor and buy it. (Matador) Davis.

SPIRIT *Clear Spirit* CD
SPIRIT *Twelve Dreams of Dr. Sardonicus* CD

Spirit's third album, ***Clear Spirit*** showcases Randy California's superb guitar work and song-writing skills. Aside from the amazing "1984" (banned on many AM stations for political content) the album languished without a hit song, adding to the increasing pressures placed on Spirit to recreate the radio appeal of "I Got a Line on You." Disillusioned, and with little to lose, this pressure led to the release of ***Twelve Dreams of Dr. Sardonicus***, a critical masterpiece of concept rock. Sardonicus couples odd song structure with stunning musicianship. "Nature's Way" was a modest hit, echoing the band's ability to mold commercial viability with artistic integrity. This is not the "I saw Jerry Garcia's ghost in a lava lamp" hippie crud you may expect, although it has many of those failings. But, this is 1970, and Spirit had been slated to play Woodstock opening for Jimi Hendrix (an inferior musician who had failed a Sonics tryout), missing the event because their label instead put them on a radio promo tour (I think their spot went to rock and droll icons ShaNaNa). Randy California and his aging father-in-law Ed Cassidy (the world's oldest and coolest looking drummer) still tour as Spirit. Both of these CDs are released as part of Sony's Legacy series, and along with all of the other releases in this series, they include unreleased material and b-sides. (Sony) Pants Mulligan.

SQUAT *It's All Over* CD

Piss and vinegar-fueled debut from San Francisco punks, Squat. Melodic and aggressive, ***It's All Over*** maintains a Lo-Fi personality with Hi-Fi results. (New Red Archives) Ryan Keberly.

THE SQUIRRELS *Scrapin' for Hits* CD

This is the singles history of The Squirrels from '84 to '96. Well, they churn out a lot of covers of popular music (late 60's - mid 70's) and yes, a lot of it is funny. At the same time, a lot of it isn't much to shout about. They get local props b-cuz they're vets of the Seattle scene and dare to include synthesizers on their records. Roy Loney loves them (along with a few others known for their Squirrels endorsements, something *I* have a problem with in any given situation). Not horrible, not essential? I'm sure someone from the West Coast would tell you otherwise. I mean, are the Toll or the Rhythm Corps essential to anyone but Michiganders? No, but at least The Squirrels have a good sense of humor. (Pop Lust) Bryan Ramirez.

STEEPLEJACK *Kitchen Radio* CD

Country meets power pop meets old-fashioned boogie. This CD took me by surprise, especially when I read the "c" word in press notes. Not being a fan of said genre, I, in my never-ending quest to broaden my horizon, slapped it on. The first song on this CD, "Valentine," is about as perfect a pop song as you're going to hear anywhere. Emotionally charged and musically perfect, "Valentine" sticks in your gray matter long after you play it. Very, very cool indeed. Other notable tracks include "Don't Break No Hearts" and "Albert Lea." The best part, however, is the fact that the lyrics are well-written and not cliché-strewn like most pop bands. ***Kitchen Radio*** could very well be the surprise CD of the year for me. Highly recommended. (Deja Disc) N. Zebrowski.

BETH & APRIL STEVENS *Sisters* CD

These two hail from the eastern side of Tennessee, with enough history and technique to ease out this fine bluegrass experience. This sweet and sometimes somber release holds down the fine tradition straight out of the Opry with the Stevens sisters' uncanny vocal resemblance to a Miss Dolly Parton. The harmonies are all honey, the shitkickers toss up the dust. Just wait until the summer cuz you'd want this wafting through the sticky air. Very nice. (Rounder) Bryan Ramirez.

STINK *New World Odor* CD

Speedy old style punk rock played by fat, ugly guys. If that's not a four star review, then you should probably consider making a list. It starts like this :

How to be punk rock

1. Be dead or dying. There is nothing more punk.
2. Be ugly/goofy looking with talent (no one can like you).
3. Be ugly/goofy looking (some people can like you).
4. If your band sucks, play faster.
5. If your band still sucks, play louder.
6. If the aforementioned doesn't help, learn some Stooges songs.
7. Recreate a genre; Punk Rock and self destruction works (GG Allin), Punk Rock and Leftist ideals doesn't (unless you are CRASS).
8. Kill self.

(Allied) Pants Mulligan.

STRATOTANKER *Gambit* CD

Imagine if a bunch of lounge lizards stumbled upon a sacred Native-American ritual that involved enough peyote to fuel your next family reunion. The digestion of the cacti button and the ceremony had enough influence on the martini buffs to acquire a bunch of instruments, ransack some sort of A.M. radio station, set up and play live on the air in order to get this message that dripped from the sky into these cube-shapes with every answer to every question in "Smoke Language." This is what Stratotanker is all about: Free form, lo-fi and spiritual. (Homestead) Bryan Ramirez.

SURFACE 10 *s/t* CD

Surface 10 grace electronic music with a landscape of interesting space and ambient music. While their music is contemplative, taking it's time to pick up the pieces, it still holds interest, by a flowing kaleidoscope of sounds. Surface 10 come dangerously close to new age, on tunes like "moment," but, this is also what separates them from the long list of electronic bands that do nothing to distinguish their sound. This is a great CD to play in the background while working - if you don't mind the music occasionally distracting you with a surprising melody. (Hypnotic) Mike Pfeiffer.

Supercharger *Supercharger Goes Way Out!* CD

CD re-release of this classic rec'd...trashed out Martian rock circa 1992 that gets everything right. THIS is the way the future will sound, and when lazy college kids twenty years from now write term papers about the influence of the 1990's garage rock scene on the popular culture of the blah blah blah, they'll be citing this record. If you only buy one contemporary garage release this month (and that sounds appropriate), this is the one. "...and they shall save the Industrial City." (Estrus) Fred Beldin.

SWITCHBLADE SYMPHONY *Serpentine Gallery* CD

Got this one WAY late (it's a 95 release). Above average Goth-electro-danse macabre from this S.F. based trio. Tina Root's vocals are as chilling as they are ethereal. The music is excellent and the production is pristine. A very good CD for late nights with the lights out. Haunting and wonderful, I'm glad Cleopatra sent this, albeit late. Definitely worth your coin. (Cleopatra) N. Zebrowski.

THC *Consenting Guinea Pig* CD

What happens when electronic music doesn't fit neatly into any of all those trendy slots? When somebody like George Sarah of THC comes along and just throws down a completely unique hard beat that isn't trance jungle, and it definitely defies the constraints of hardcore? What happens is a total shaking of the senses. A nod towards playing electronic music that just sounds good. ***Consenting Guinea Pig*** takes another stab at animal rights activism by giving you a beat and liner notes to complete the thoughts. George then redefines THC, with "Need to Destroy," a slower groove with female vocals. THC is the chemical in Marijuana that supposedly produces the hallucinatory effects. While I'm listening to THC I'm getting a vision of an electronic horizon filled with beautiful things to come. (Fifth Colvmn) Mike Pfeiffer

THIRST *Through The Wire* CD

This is a great disc. Pure songs - clear, melodious music and strong lyrics without sap. The sound is kind of pared down, doesn' t bang and crash too much, but is rather smooth and resonant. "End of the Millenium" and "Deep Blue Sea" have become my favorite tracks, but they're all distinct, complete pieces, which is unbelievably refreshing in an age where so much "music" simply blends into a cloud of fuzz and feedback. This is an album where you can hear what's going on with all the players - nothing gets lost or overpowered by anything else, and it's a harmonious balance. As far as Thirst's attitude - well, maybe I just like this stuff so much because it's easy to identify with - they throw out realism and melancholy, ideals and hope together. It's the shadows and light of our space and times, and they draw you in simply, without falling into juvenile extremes. This band deserves attention, and you just may be thrilled and inspired for giving it to them. (Iguana) Beth M.

36D *Endomorphic Joy* CD

Recorded all the way back in 1991, when Big Chief was still cookin', this is a very cool smash 'em up between Born Without A Face (still the best band ever from Grand Rapids), Slot and the aforementioned Chief. Why this didn't see the light of day until now is a mystery because this is a toughie to be sure. Eddie Alterman is one of the best drummers in the world, and here he provides a straight backbone that guitarist and art fancier Mark Dancey feeds off with a real fervor. To top it all off, the legendary Robert Eastway handles the vox with the same leathery pipes he used to propel Born W/O A Face with years ago. This is a limited pressing, so if you're interested ya' better act fast. (Small Stone) D. Wood.

THRALL *Chemical Wedding* CD

Mike Hard (formerly with the sorely missed God Bullies) is back. And talk about a triumphant return! ***Chemical Wedding*** is an unrelenting mix of samples, thud and guitar scrunch. This is much heavier than the G. Bullies (and not as metallic as another of Hard's former groups, Hand Over Head). The coup de grace, however, is Hard's intense lyrics and over-the-top vocal style - a potent combination. Production is ultra clean and that squeezes sounds out of your speakers that sound dramatic even at low volume. This disc is infinitely better than the G. Bullies swan song on Alternative Tentacles, and as subversive as anything ever released by that label. A "must have." (Alternative Tentacles) N. Zebrowski.

JOHNNY THUNDERS *Have Faith* CD

The sad legacy of men who don't die in their prime is greatest-hits style live recordings done overseas where they're still stars (if they ever were). Though Thunders and company sound energetic but not quite as on the rock numbers, the "unplugged" set has some unique moments. It's not the appropriate showcase for his thin, mush-mouthed voice and the audience sounds dubbed in, but Johnny alone delivers an excellent "Can't Put Your Arm Around A Memory," along with a haunting Stones cover ("Play With Fire" sounding like a come-on from the grave). At one point he mutters, "I'm getting so old," which of course he was...junkies age quickly. Now he's dead, after the prolonged super-limbo that the 80's were for him, so this superfluous collection can surface but completists only should seek it out...you kids go buy *Live at The Speakeasy DTK* (Jungle Records re-released it on CD with his equally necessary *LAMF* so you have no excuse) for a lesson in why Johnny Thunders is important in the first place. (Mutiny) Fred Beldin.

TONE *Sustain* CD

An amazing record. 10 choice nuggets of instrumental magic, performed by the aptly named Tone: The Guitar Ensemble. This octet is seemingly led by one Norm Veenstra, who is credited with writing / co-writing eight of the ten songs herein. Very similar to Savage Republic, ***Sustain*** also has elements akin to the work of Glen Branca. Topping it off is the beautiful packaging by the folks at Independent Project. Their "discfolio" (used almost exclusively and created by I.P.R.) is wonderfully artistic in its simplicity. An amazing record - Bravo! (Independent Project / Dischord) N. Zebrowski.

TORCHER *Your Word Against Fire* CD

First, I got the *Home* EP, and I loved that. Soon as I scored the full-length, the pleasure went through the roof. A three-piece with real strong female vox, along with steady, lashing yet rhythmic rock' n' roll. It's on pace with that city-wise-but-prefer-the-country gritty, blue-collar with a dose of sensitivity music. This band sounds like they are in it purely for music's sake. (Tim/Kerr) Bryan Ramirez.

TROUBADOUR SQUAT STRING TRIO *s/t* CD

Instro-deal guitar, bass, fiddle and bass clarinet churn some abstract ballet of sorts. Pretty loose sorta rhythmic garble two-steppin' to dementia's time. No Wave Bluegrass isn't so far off-base. (Pleather) Bryan Ramirez.

UGLY STICK *Absinthe* CD

I hear a lot of surf rock rockabilly influence in their style. The CD itself I thought was well above par...which I don't know if I blame the band itself...more like the producers. I personally think that with a better recording and a little more direction, this album could be a winner, but lead singer Dave's voice just sounds like he's projecting from a cave. Not cool. (Sink Sink Music) Durt 101.

UK SUBS *Occupied* CD

Never a bastion of less is more, the UK Subs released 10 studio recordings from 1979 to 1988. Nine years later, the Subs are back with more punk rock than you can shake a spiked wristband at. *Occupied* is more of the same, the bastard son of hard rock(Mott the Hoople), pub/chant rock(Sham 69, Stiff Little Fingers) , and punk rock (The Saints/The Damned). Most impressive on this release is their ability to ape early Gang of Four on the masterful "Solutions." This poltico-ska anthem is more Gang of Four than The Clash ever was (and maybe even more Gang of Four than the Gang of Four ever was). Apparently, this is not the sole 1996 release by these boys, as this is just the first in a series of many new recordings to be released this year by FallOut. Am waiting with baited breath for the next release by these oft overlooked masters of punk rock. (FallOut) Pants Mulligan.

UNIVERSAL ORDER OF ARMAGEDDON *s/t* CD

Dissonant guitars are pitted against each other and both are on the verge of feeding back. Simplicity made complicated via odd time signatures in the universal sonic spectrum. Benedict or Quixote? Does the invention of the wheel equal nuclear Armageddon? Fences and walls pointless? These 15 songs, filled with anger and celebration, will help you find the answers to the above questions by seeking the inner truth within and discover your universal order of Armageddon. (Kill Rock Stars) Shawn Wernette.

UNSTEADY *Tightrope* CD

With this release, Unsteady brightly delivers an hour's worth of good-natured, energetic ska. The album is one of the most aptly named and well-matched to its cover art I've seen in a while, which speaks accurately for the tightness of the band. Ringling Brothers meet Big Band meet The Three Stooges (well, seven). The beginning tracks especially are clownish and jaunty - you could tango to the opener, but not at a black-tie party! Admittedly, I'm not well-versed in ska, but I know good musicianship when I hear it, and this fits the bill, a carnival whirl of tunes that fortunately do NOT get repetitious or stale. The insert lists nine "featured artists" appearing besides the seven members of Unsteady, and maybe this is part of the trick; they seemed to know who to use when, for added seasoning. I particularly liked Kym Klift as vocalist on a couple tracks - her voice lent a completely new dimension. And not all the songs are silly by any means; some nice characterization and variety going on here. Nifty stuff, for the most part. If ska is cotton candy to your ears, pick this up. (Immune) Beth M.

VERSUS *Secret Swingers* CD

I'm embarrassed to admit this, but before hearing this CD, I had actually only read about Versus. Yes, I am a poseur! But, I did read a lot about them (still a poseur), enough to be very eager to check this CD out. *Secret Swingers* doesn't disappoint me either. It's well-crafted, alternative rock at its best. Versus' music is aggressive, but also full of hooks and catchy lines. The vocals are mostly sung by Robert Baluyut, occasionally backed up by Fontaine Toups, the female member of this band. All the songs on *Secret Swingers* are great, making this one of the best CD's I've heard this year. (Caroline) Mike Pfeiffer.

WARZONE *The Sound Of Revolution* CD

Produced by Dr. Know from Bad Brains, NYC's legendary Warzone are back with a vengeance. Lyrical content in keeping with the usual themes, unity, brotherhood and the straight-edge party line are dealt out with aggressive zeal. They'll probably tour, especially considering the two sell-out shows they did with fellow skin heroes, Agnostic Front at The Wetlands in NYC last fall, so keep your eyes open and your jaws tight if you're interested. (Victory) D. Wood.

WILL HAVEN *s/t* CD

At 1st listen I thought this was just another hardcore record. On the 2nd listen I thought it was an above average hardcore band. During the 3rd listen I found myself wanting to read the lyrics. My 4th listen was playing Track 4 "Fisk" at a party while I was singing along. The 5th listen (a mere 36 hours later) took place when I played the entire CD for some friends of mine who are in bands. The 6th listen was a request to hear it again at the same party. My 7th listen was while riding my bike the next morning. 80 hours after receiving the CD, I'm on my 11th run through & I'm now writing this. Will Haven is amazing! I would like to tell you that they are a vegan hardcore band, but it's much more. It is better described as ultra-heavy, screamy emo-core with progressive guitar harmonies and some very intriguing breakdowns. Imagine an Iconoclast, Snapcase, V.O.D., & Far power shake. Go out & buy this record immediately or forever suffer in your ignorance of the true scope of hardcore. (Landspeed/Revelation Distro) David J. Ciancio.

ROZZ WILLIAMS *The Whorse's Mouth* CD

Last year I reviewed a disc by Rozz Williams and Gitane Demone, in which I slagged Williams' work as pretentious (give or take some invectives). When *The Whorse's Mouth* hit my desk, I looked at it and figured, "Oh no, not again." So it sat on said desk, staring at me for more than a week before I gave in to it's siren song and played it. In the press kit, Williams' openly discusses his homosexuality, his heroin addiction, Christian Death (who he co-founded) and the Goth scene which he helped spawn (Ironically, he disavows the entire scene). Ready to slag, with preconceived notions that this too would be crap, I was jarred by the fact that *The Whorse's Mouth* is quite good. Spoken word, accompanied by sparse music and chilling samples, will send the listener into the world occupied by Williams' demons. Despite the fact that Williams' world is a horror show, there is an air of resolve and dignity that shines through the murk of that place, raising Williams up. This is a fascinating look into one man's soul that is as frightening as it is gratifying. Amazing. (Hollows Hill) Norman Zebrowski.

WYTCHHYKER *Aaspelunker* CD

Boogie sensations gone wild? The gravy train has derailed with the release of this weighty fucker -- at first you don't know whether to laugh or cry. Wytchhyker are the kinda guys who would pee in the punch at your family reunion and then spit chicken bones into your Aunt Flossie's glory hole for posterity. Meatiness is next to godliness, and *Aaspelunker* is stacked as high as the corn beef classic at the Plaza Deli in Southfield. Let's eat. (Small Stone) D. Wood.

XANAX 25 *Sweet Vermouth* CD

I could have used some Xanax to get through this. Incredibly boring, cliched and predictable attempt at being really, really cooool... A real bonus is a cover of one of the crappiest songs ever, "Jane Says," from everyones buddy Fairy Parrell. (Paradigm) Matt Bour.

YATSURA *We Are Yatsura* CD

Formerly known as Urusei Yatsura, Yatsura is not a Japanese rock band, although their name does come from a Japanese cartoon series. Yatsura is a Scottish band that blends lo-fi indie pop with wailing guitars and feedback. If you want to throw out a few band names, try a combination of the Fall, Pavement and Sonic Youth. *We Are Yatsura* opens with a manic-paced "Siamese," then rolls into a slower, poppier "First Day On A New Planet." "Pow R. Ball" is insane mayhem, and "Black Hole Love" is a sonic ballad. While there are a couple of fillers, Yatsura manage to pound out a smashing racket of a debut. (Che/Sire) Mike Pfeiffer.

ZEKE *Flat Tracker* CD

15 tracks in less than 20 minutes a la The Dwarves. Unlike the much missed and much maligned Dwarves, these boys have a racing mill under the hood. HiTest action. This has got to be the best record label in the universe at this moment. (Scooch Pooch) Pants Mulligan.

V/A *Amplexus: Collected from the 1995 Ltd. Series Vidna Obmana - Thom Brennan - Steve Roach* CD

A beautiful disc of wonderfully written, well-produced instrumentals. The music is different, yet similar in that the three pieces presented here are enchanting, thrilling masterworks. The compositions by these artists are aural sculptures that its listeners will enjoy with each play. Perfect for late night reflection. *Amplexus* is a very prudent investment. (Projekt) N. Zebrowski.

V/A *Am Rep Equipped Sampler 1996/97* CD

13 songs from one of the best goddamned labels in the world. Am Rep took a lot of hits in the early 90's losing bands like Helmet, Tar, and the God Bullies, but they made up for it by signing ass-kickers Guzzard, Love 666, and Hammerhead. Now the label has a new crop o' talents such as Supernova, Servotron, and Lollipop as well as old-timers The Cows, Unsane, and Feedtime. All of the tunes on this CD can be found at your local music emporium on other records, but this is a nice, concise platter proving yet again that Am Rep is the whip. Play this loud. (Am Rep) N. Zebrowski.

V/A *Kwanzaa Party* CD

Have any idea what Kwanzaa is all about? Basically it's "an African-American holiday dedicated to celebrating the best in people of African descent and their cultures." The celebration starts the day after X-mas and ends New Year's Day (catch it next year!). It was created in the mid-60's by Dr. Maulana Karenga from C.S.U. in Long Beach. This is a fascinating little package; not only do you have the history of Kwanzaa, you get recipes for dishes and a worldly selection of African music (soul, Caribbean, traditional African, etc.). 14 songs, 14 artists. Very educational and admirable. (Rounder) Bryan Ramirez.

V/A *Death Row Greatest Hits* CD

As one of the most anticipated rap collections to be released, *Death Row Greatest Hits*, only disappoints in what could have been. A mega 2CD collection of 32 songs, this collection packs the goods along also a couple of lame fillers like Jewell's " F--- wit Dre Day." Spotlighting on Snoop Doggy Dog who performs the majority of the songs, he again and again proves how smooth he is. What is sadly missing from *Death Row Greatest Hits* is the bulk of Dr. Dre's hits and production. He may of split from the label, but he created Death Row's signature sound and style. His absence is undeniably noticeable. With the recent arrests, crossovers, and deaths, this collection marks the end of the gangster rap, put it on and reminisce. (Death Row) Mike Pfeiffer.

V/A *Eerie Bazaar* CD

Where music is afraid to go. Powerful tracks from the omnipresent Colon on the Cob (x-Post Mordam, "Underwater Fight to the Finnish"), Hemorrhoy Rogers (aka "Big Poo Generator"), metal kings Breathilizor (whose lost recordings are cherished by ETCH writer and musical misfit Bryan Ramirez), Teenage Larvae (wayward members of The Cows and God Bullies), and loser scions Sockeye. Not for the weak of stomach, this compilation personifies the underground tape trader scene. None of this is easily classified as anything beyond noise (save Dayton, Ohio's Anachronauts). Loud, obnoxious, annoying, overtalented, untalented, and difficult. If you've read this far, this is exactly what you need. (Eerie Materials) Pants Mulligan.

V/A *European Hardcore - The Way It Is* CD

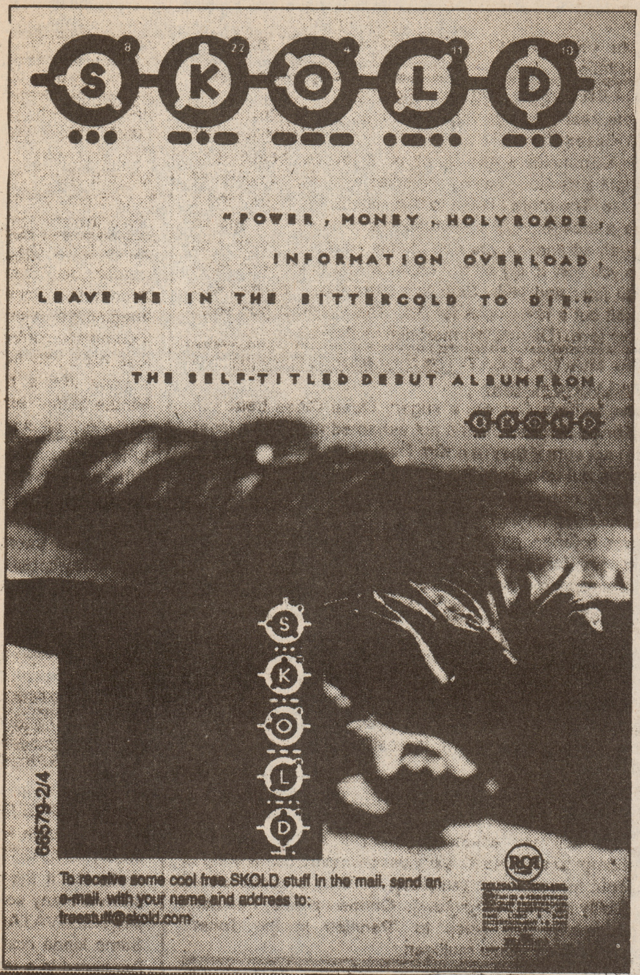
Judging by the cover of this CD (one big clenched fist!), I would expect nothing less then tough chugga-chugga metal H/C. While the majority of this CD fits that description, there are many songs that stand out that are more of the `Fat Wreck' pop-punk sound. Stand out tracks from Germany's Belisha Beacon and Holland's Tech 9. Gigantor, another band from Germany, gets the award for best song title with "My Dad Looks Like Lemmy." Overall an interesting compilation. If you like to juggle your angry metal and your happy punk all in one sitting, then make sure to pick this one up. (Lost & Found) scott yahtzee.

V/A *Fall '96 Sampler* CD

From the skunk-punk of the divine Latimer to the limp, nerdy coolness of Lizard Music to the fat breezy candy of The Miss Alans (the band Zoo was stupid for dropping), this sampler is more fun than a box of chocolates. Because even after you bite into one, they don't get stuck to the bottom of the box or leave little pieces of walnuts between your teeth. Here you shall also find loose audio perfection from Scenic, Loop Guru, Stanford Prison Experiment, and signs of things to come from upcoming albums by Kristeen Young, Rick Boston, and Travis John Alford. Yum. (World Domination) Norene Cashen

V/A *Glory Daze Soundtrack* CD

I gotta feelin' this movie is headed straight for video because I've never seen any ad's for it anywhere. I want to see it, though, because it has one of my favorite actresses Alyssa Milano in it. If I was a movie producer, would cast Alyssa in every film I made. The Vandals contribute the majority of the music, but NOFX, Mr. T Experience, New Bomb Turks, Sublime and Tilt get into the act as well. Not good as it sounds, but ya'



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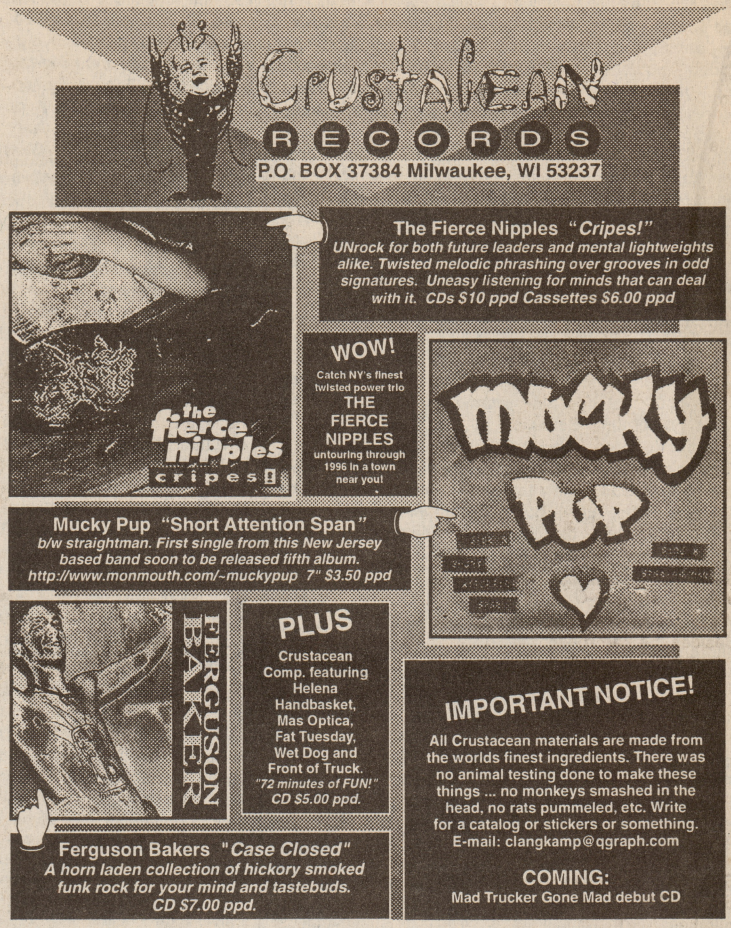

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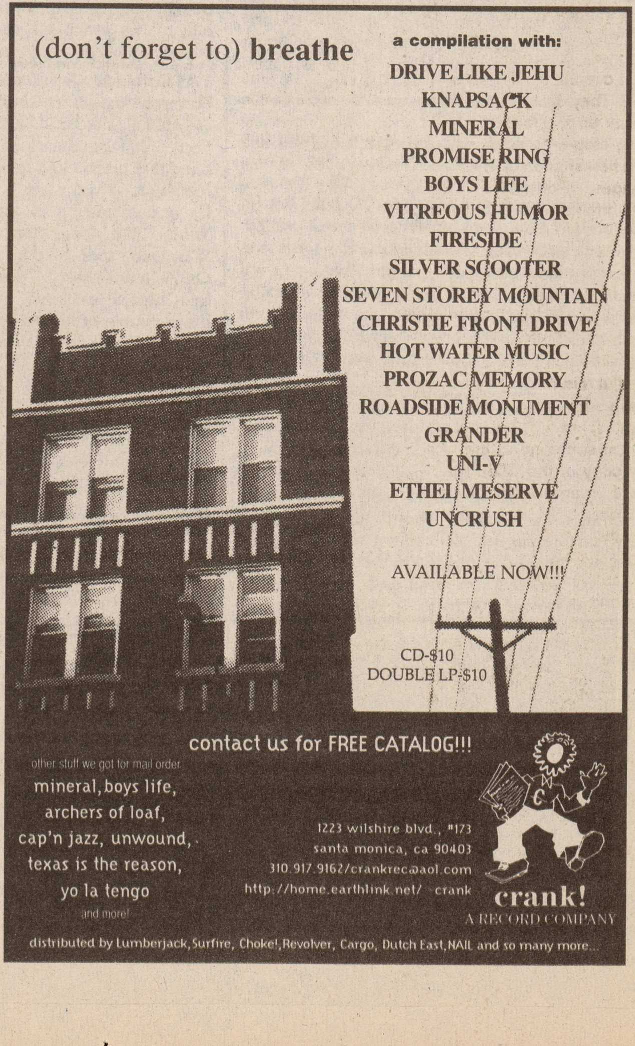

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got that Alyssa thing to factor in.... (Kung Fu) D. Wood.

V/A *Heide Says: 1996 Lookout Sampler* CD

20 bands! 26 songs! All previously released material by the best-n-brightest Lookout Records has to offer. The music, like the label, ranges from punk to power pop and, because of the large number of bands / songs, there are a couple of duds that found their way on to this platter. Some of the notables: The Queers, Mr T. Experience, The Groovie Ghoulies and Fifteen. All-in-all, this is a very good primer for those of you unfamiliar with this label. Worth having. (Lookout!) N. Zebrowski.

V/A *Hopelessly Devoted To You: A Hopeless Records Sampler* CD

You want the skinny on Hopeless Recs? Here's what you get. 15 songs from Hopeless's roster, including unreleased material from Funeral Oration, 88 Fingers Louie (doing the Misfits classic "Night of the Living Dead"), Falling Sickness, Digger, and Nobodys. Also appearing are Guttermouth, White Caps and Schlong. There's even a hidden bonus track for crying out loud! But the most important thing you should know is that this CD costs only a measly $3.99 brand new! Snag this puppy if you get a chance. (Hopeless) N. Zebrowski.

V/A *In The Be-Guinea There Was Yikes!...And It Was Good. Vol. 6* CD

Besides the bad rodent take on Spinal Tap in the title, this CD from our East Lansing label is pretty much cheese-free. Surprisingly delicious tracks from bands you may or may not recognize (read: local). Some pop out at you more than others. But just to prove I'm a hard-workin' writer (and a fair guy), here's the low-down on each and every track. DT's: The song is "Exit to Stay," and it's typical la-la tail-wagging love that doesn't give you the shakes, but may leave you slightly hung-over. Nice vocals, nice playing in that but-I-don't-hear-a-single kind of way. Nineteen Wheels: The song is "13 Seconds," and while a psychoanalytic approach might be tempted to delve into this band's obsession with numbers, we'll just say that they have a scruffy way of delivering an exceptionally creative and focused tune. The good images (they even make a Greyhound bus seem romantic) get squished sometimes between really ordinary ideas like "hope you'll be true while I'm gone," but overall, it's dig-able. Blue Dog Pict: The tune is "Reel." They don't spare the bass or the falsetto (read: fairly strong singer) or the big, chunky guitars. Interesting stop-n-go song structure that actually holds up even when shaken up by loads of seismic transitions and changes. Powerface: The song is (decent) "Big Plug" and brings to mind many a heavy band (Metallica, Korn) with the surging shock guitars and electric screams. The Caustic Pop!: The song is "Finger to the Scene," and its title is enough to make you smile. An eerie screech opens up this fist-clenched fit of anger that stretches out into a fun pop song. True to their name. Monkey Chuck: The tune is "Can't Go Back." A lament over high school days? You can't go back, so don't try. Put this music to another set of lyrics, and you might have something. Buh-bye. Grin: The song is "Cut Me Down," (I actually had to listen to this one over the phone from someone at the label, cuz it was missing from my copy of the CD!). But Grin's a kind of crazy, fast-paced, manic attack of odd ideas. I think. File Under: Skilled repetition. How do you get so good at doing that same thing over and over again? Domestic Problems: "I Think It's Funny" is a horny humpin' salute to ("hey, hey, hey, hey, that's what I say") boring lyrics. "I just wanna get close to you girl/ The choice is up to you." zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz... The Tails: "Koo Koo" has this really cute off-beat creativity and really good vocals and guitars. A band that you might go see just to find out what musicians are like who sing about holding their "koo koos." Quite fun, I imagine. Conscience Pilate: "Never for You" is the song by this band with the biblically tongue-in-cheek name. Sounds like somebody's been listening to Jellyfish or something. Fat Amy: "Million Days" and a million ways to say, "My band has a good singer, but we try too hard and we're named after a fat chick." Mental Landscape: "Regret" is more hollow and dismal celebration from Detroit's doctors of stage smoke and mixing board witchcraft. Sounds like something from a Cleopatra compilation with shouts and beats that could quicken the dead. Queue-up: "I Hate You Mr. Einstein" is conceptually and maybe musically one of the most interesting songs on this record. Creepy in its own straightforward way with a very strong theme and effective volume control. Total chaos plus total poise. Would like to hear more from this band (if you care to send me something). A couple of tweaks away from startling. Storyville: "Major Bad" takes quiet keys and sentimental harmonies to tell a sad story that reaches for the poetic and almost gets it... Dorothy: "Plastic Tambourine" says you can sound like Natalie Merchant all you want, but don't steal her shtick, cuz people will find out and write about it in magazines. Very nice vocals. Drew Howard: "Uh-huh" is fun, but sloppy enough to bring to mind a very drunk man doing Karaoke to Bob Seger in a country bar. I have witnessed this. And I was never the same again. Chip Diver & The Sack Attack: "Nerf Pants" is the song. File under: take your CD player in for emergency repair or Hal (the computer) having a bad acid trip. That's all for now. Don't forget to eat your spinach and support your local music (Yikes!) Norene Cashen

V/A *KRM Radio Network* CD

Right off the bat, I have no idea what the KRM Radio Network is all about. I received no press sheet & it doesn't say in the CD. I do know that it is a compilation of 17 unsigned bands from IL, ME, NH, MA, PA, MI, RI & NJ. Most of it is rock-n-roll or 80's influenced metal. Track #3, Scarred Souls reminds of Dokken without the licks. T#6 Michael Bourgeois sings a nice post grunge, metal ballad. Problem is, the bass guitar is so high in the mix, that it drowns everything else out. Fans of 80's Big Rock, go right to T#7, Q-36 "Party". No bands do this style of music anymore, but if anybody will bring it back, hard rock guitar player Brain Rorke & Q-36 can. T#8, Rub The Buddha "Paramucci" is a 4 minute & 19 second gem of utter silliness using one word, the title. The bio lists influences as "pop, country, rock-n-roll, jazz, rockabilly, surf, blues, ethnic, etc." I'll buy that. T#9 is a "Dead Souls"-Nine Inch Nails stab at Goth-pop. I can't help but think of that guy that everybody's watching, Rockwell, or 80's horror film theme songs. T#11, Max The Dog sounds like Van Halen. T#12 Crazy Daisy can be described as red-haired Julie Brown goes country. T#'s 13-16 don't deserve much mention. T#17, The Gene Walk Group, from Freehold, NJ (home to Bruce Springsteen) could also be called The Bon Jovi Group ala "Dead Or Alive." (Krystal Rose Music) David J. Ciancio.

V/A *Punk-A-Rama, Vol. 2* CD

Pretty great line-up on this comp., highlighting Epitaph's bulging roster. Bad Religion, Descendents, Down By Law, NOFX, Pennywise, Rancid, The Humpers, New Bomb Turks, Voodoo Glow Skulls and SNFU are some of the contestants vying for your ears' attention. Mr. Gurewitz and pals even toss in TSOL's "Code Blue" from the 1981 *Dance With Me* LP as a reference point. Tanks a bunch, ya' know. (Epitaph) D. Wood.

V/A *Scooch Pooch Records Plays: Their Original Sins* CD

Along with Estrus Records, the fellas at Scooch Pooch put out the finest rock and roll money can buy. The Stellar lineup (Lord High Fixers, The La Donnas, Zeke [adding balls to Cheap Trick's "Hello There Ladies and Gentlemen"], PopDefect, The Bottom Feeders, and others) showcases this label's first 30 powerhouse 7 inchers. When I first got this little gem, I surmised "Hey, now I don't have to buy the Scooch Pooch singles I missed." What a fucking moron I was. Now I gotta go out and buy all of the sevens just for the b-sides. Best compilation since *Live at the Deaf Club*. (Scooch Pooch) Pants Mulligan.

V/A *Skalloween (Oi! Skampilation #2)* CD

The Slackers play the Munster's theme. The Skoi! Dats give us Misfits-like ("oh-wee-oh") ska. Detroit's own Pist-N-Broke chip in with their own tough guy 77-style ska-influenced punk. Blanks 77 continue the romp down memory lane, sounding about as talented as The Exploited, but also showing a lot of heart and commitment. The Krays are more old punk-style ska (999 or a more manly Buzzcocks). The Furys donate more punk bombast without a hint of ska (except for the horns). Skinnerbox's two tracks are a throwback to the pre-punk days of ska. Except for a lack of an accent, you might guess they were from Jamaica circa '65. Skavengers play a generic Bosstones-type Boston ska. Ruder Than You finish out the 16 track disc with their "two-tone-like" "Justice." All-in-all, a very enjoyable listen that stands the test of time. There is a variety of "ska" here that is more diverse than the title might indicate. (Radical) fike.

V/A *Skandalous: I've Got You Covered* CD

14 tracks, 11 bands. I'd say it's a winner. The Skatalites do "Guns Of Navarone" and "Policewoman." I think they're my favorite on here. The Toasters do a decent "Secret Agent Man." There's also covers of the "Batman Theme," "Scooby Doo" and "Sanford And Son." Interesting ska listening. Recommended for kicks. (Shanachie) Mazzola.

V/A *Skank For Brains - Saturday Matinee* CD

A daunting, yet rewarding disc. Eight bands, 28 tracks. All of the bands being ska, punk or punkska or skapunk (their terminology). The best way to view this compilation is in terms of the bands. So, here's the list (no order): Kongo Shock (four songs) - Very neatly charted out mambo/ska/rock. Would make a good band for one of those theme bars at Disneyland or Bush Gardens. Link 80 - If the Circle Jerks played ska, it might sound like this. Nothing Cool - Punk. California. Sounds old. Have they been around? Sounds like it. (five songs) Gadjits - Four songs of solid ska/punk and a quirky sense of humor ("Sassy [Induced Bulimia]" being among the best). Square Roots - Give us straight-up authentic ska at a nice leisurely pace. Rude Bones - From Japan, they contribute one song of oi!/ska. Nuclear Rabbit and Los Rudiments fill up the end of the disc with some negligible college-joke songs. Well worth whatever asking price, this collection is an absolute must for ska fans, especially those interested in the newest and most noteworthy bands. Beach also does Michigan's own Suicide Machines, The Meremen, Mudsharks and the Uptones among others. (Beach Recordings) fike.

V/A *Spin Control* CD

Techno is generally not my bag, but there is some real nice work here. Bass Kittens, Sahara Fish, Mephisto Odyssey, and Robbers of Antiquity are four of the eight bands featured here by URB magazine for this compilation. If you like techno or any facet of dance music this album will not disappoint you. Strong beats from beginning to end with some really nice mixing in-between. (IMIX) Tim Arnold.

V/A *A Taste Of Tradition* CD

One of the great things about the advent of CD's is the reissues of good, old stuff. In their lust to sell, sell, sell, they've dug up everything ever recorded and put it on a disc. Good for us, inveterate consumers. The Traditional label was started in the 50's and was (apparently) a clearing-house for all sorts of music with artists ranging from Leadbelly to Woody Herman to Liam Clancy, it's hard to think of a unifying theme. Now, the label has been resurrected, and this CD is the harbinger of things to come. Absolutely every song on here is good - so good in fact that it's hard to pick out favorites. "Mama And Papa Hopkins," by Lightnin' Hopkins is touching to anyone whose parents ever argued. Erroll Gardner is just as lush as lush can be, and my old favorite, Big Bill Broonzy, makes three guitar-thumping appearances. There's just too much goodness on this disc to write about it all and to think that Tradition intends to release full discs of all the artists. (Rounder) Scott Joyner.

V/A *We're All Frankies (A Tribute to Martin Rev and Alan Vega)* CD

A CD full of covers is not really my idea of a good listen, but I made the exception because Suicide was such a great band. Most of the bands did a pretty good job and didn't mess up the originals too badly. It's hard to judge a band by a cover, though, especially when the originals are so damn good. If you enjoy a "new take" on some old classics, then you'll enjoy this. (Fifth Colvmn) Matt Bour.

LUCKY SEVENS

ANTI-FLAG *Kill! Kill! Kill!* 7"

Pittsburgh's Anti-Flag are angry about something, what that "something" is I have no idea. This typical punk rock 7" includes: Songs about the scene, reprints of all their flyers and pictures of the band looking half-drunk flipping the bird. Yawn. (Selfserv) Ryan Keberly.

BANTAM ROOSTER ***Miss Luxury*** **7"**

Hailing from East Lansing, MI, the Rooster is the dynamic duo of rock and roll, man. I never knew one guitar and one set of skins could make such a blissful racket. T. Jackson Potter is THE superman of rock and roll. Off stage, his mild-mannered hipster persona is another face in the crowd, but live, he transforms into a kind of super Elvis on acid laced with plenty of strychnine, wailing and bending the hell out of those strings on all the supreme rock-o-billy chords. The single is a nice intro to the band, but by GAWD it doesn't do justice to their live performance. Don't ever miss 'em in your town, and look for a full-length on Crypt soon. (Crypt) Davis.

BLONDE REDHEAD "Symphony of Treble" b/w "Kasuality" 7'

Their first for the Nice Label, this band has impressed me from the beginning. Too often compared to Sonic Youth, their sound is similar, but the two part harmonies, vocal styles, and different drum sounds distinguish them enough to make it their own thing. And they do it well. Very well. The two songs here are more dissonant than anything on *Violenta*, but they still tremble with the power that only a truly good band can provide. If you like dreamy noise, pick this up, as well as the band's other two. Can't wait for the whole record. (Touch & Go) mpayok.

THE CONNIE DUNGS ***Missy & Johnny*** **7"**

If Maury Povich knew about this, he would probably beat the living crap out of The Connie Dungs live on his talk show -- not only because they make fun of his wife's name, but for writing four whining, nasal punk tunes about the women that are mean to them. One can ascertain from the lyrics that The Dungs have had more than a few unsuccessful relationships with the opposite sex, however, in a feeble attempt to pass the blame, it's evident that their rejections stem from their own character flaws and infidelities. (Harmless) Ryan Keberly.

ELLERY JETT ***Push Pause*** **7"**

The title track on this is some pretty good Emo, reminds me a little of Kill Holiday. The b-side here, "English Irish, Scottish," is a little harder to pin down. It starts out with a jam, sort of the way some Iceburn songs do, but then it turns kind of Indy-Pop with this weird country lead. "Side B" is definitely destined to be a b-side. I am very interested to hear a full length by these guys. (Hep-Cat) Tim Arnold.

FIVE SECONDS EXPIRED "Puzzle" b/w "Turn & Turn" 7"

As a prelude to their full-length release, *Null*, this single provides just a taste of Five Seconds Expired's coarse, riff-heavy brand of New York hardcore. (Another Planet) Ryan Keberly.

FLOOR "Goddard" b/w "Slugthrower" 7"

Ultra-heavy, Bassless, Black Sabbath meets KYUSS noise from Florida. "Goddard" relies strictly on samples and other obscure noises, whereas "Slugthrower" employs distant, foggy vocals to get the job done on the flip-side. I'm quite anxious to hear a full-length release from these fellows. Also, big bonus points awarded for elaborate sleeve packaging (includes official F.B.I. fingerprint recording card) and snazzy artwork. (Rhetoric) Ryan Keberly.

JAKS "Carnation" b/w "Damn Bloodsuckers" 7'

Beware the vampires! Fresh off the crash and burn of the tragically great Choke label in Chicago that released their "Hollywood Blood Capsules", Jaks finally release their own new single. Same weird guitar, quirky rhythms, and dream vocals. Jaks want to suck your blood, so let them. You won't be disappointed. mpayok

JFA / JACK KILLED JILL split 7"

Where have JFA been all these years? Sources say that they have been spending the last six years skateboarding down the entire west coast. I am glad that they are back playing again. The sound is a little different now, but still enjoyable. Jack Killed Jill is the standout of this wax platter. Punk Rock with very snotty female vocals, Greg Ginn-esque guitar playing, and a verse that you can sing along with. What else do you need? Looking forward to seeing more from the both of these bands. (New Red Archives) scott yahtzee.

THE KRINKLES "Evil Waterbed" b/w "Fun" 7"
THE KRINKLES s/t 7" EP

Hooky indie-pop. Very catchy with silly...I mean comical lyrics. Not bad, the songs are toe-tappin' ditties that grow on you -- at least they did for me. This Chicago trio definitely have talent, and on a scale of 1 - 10, I'd give 'em a "7," with the caveat that they're movin' up the food chain fast. Musically, they're a hybrid of indie-pop, power pop and pop punk (more pop than a soda fountain - bad pun I know). The song "Fun" gets high marks. Check 'em out soon! For you collector chumps, the "Evil Waterbed" single is on red wax. (Super 800) (Cannibal) N. Zebrowski.

LESS THAN JAKE ***Crash Course In Being An Asshole*** **7"**

When it comes to being fun and upbeat, Less Than Jake take first prize in the contest. LTJ take their punk-Ska sound and give you their renditions of three great songs. Never have you heard sound so good, "Your Love" by the Outfield, "Teenager in Love," by Dion & The Belmonts and "Freeze Frame" by the J. Geils Band. Definitely a party record. (Rhetoric) scott yahtzee.

LITTERBOX s/t 7"

Throaty, lo-fi NYC punk. Litterbox are a wee bit rough around the edges, but they do manage to salvage some finesse on "Ecstasy." (Axhandle) Ryan Keberly.

MICRO MINI 7"

I'll be short and to the point here. This is a boring 7" that could have been put out by any bar band from any college in any town in America ?? (Collective Fruit) Tim Arnold.

NEVERTHELESS / EXPLODEE split 7"

21 certainly feels a lot older when you see a seven-inch with a big 45 rpm hole in the middle. It was like I was holding a little bit of 80's nostalgia in my very hand. Why, I remember the days of snuggling up to the ol' Sears & Roebuck record player, popping in that elusive yellow thing-a-ma-jig, and riding a five-and-a-half minute musical high on the intoxicating sounds of Motley Crue or were it Prince, perhaps Poison, or possibly even Men At Work. What's that you say? You didn't like Motley Crue? No matter. It's not the band names that are important, it's the experience. Maybe for you it was Debbie Gibson and the immortal Thompson Twins. So, don't be ashamed of yourself, stand up and be counted. Be proud you grew up in the 80's! The decade of mediocrity! Unlike the bands of the 80's, Nevertheless and Explodee really seem to have a firm grasp on what it means to make music. They each contrast fuzzy guitars with hook-laden vocals and a sense of confidence that not only carries, but drives the melody. Explodee's "Novelty" is a convincing personal outline that conquers its heartfelt sentiment to present itself as triumphant. Providing comparison is "The Priesthood" by Nevertheless, who sandbag their efforts to supply head-first chorus plunges and timely solos. (Sidearm) Ryan Keberly.

PENTHOUSE / COUNTRY TEASERS split 7"

Listening to this 7", one would never guess Penthouse is from London. "Le Stunt" sounds like an amazingly restrained David Yow fronting a hopped up Chrome Cranks. The flip is The Country Teasers "Getaway! [car]". 3 minutes of that new Jon Spencer blues rock that I don't quite understand, but like quite a bit. Had I bought this 7" I would not have been disappointed. (Butchers Wig) Pants Mulligan.

QUIXOTE "A Force" b/w "No Bark" 7"

Members of Jihad and the First Cavale blast out more high energy tunes. This trio cranks out the same type of dissonance that Party Of Helicopters / Harriet The Spy have embarked upon. Drive Like Jehu, Sideshow, Rye comparisons have been made, but Bugs will probably conquer the dragon/windmill for God's sake! Check out "No Bark" for that introspective sonic sound and dream the impossible dream! (Makoto Recordings) Shawn Wernette.

RADIOLARIA " Zond 5" b/w "Landslide" 7"

Gritty, noisy indie rock from this Cincinnati crew. Discordant music and sleepy-soft female vox on the a-side ("Zond 5") offset the tune in an unsettling manner. The b-side, "Landslide," has a cool Blonde Redhead-dating-Sonic Youth feel to it. Screeching guitar music sure to float your boat. (Trout) N. Zebrowski.

REFECT REFECT ***What's Your Defect*** **7"**

Sue P. Fox and Matt E. Moon (any relation to Slim?) make you sit through a session of lo-fi, avant-garbage that makes me wonder, "What the hell is this?" It's out there, but not too far. Sounds more like a rough draft at times or incomplete ideas for songs. "Imaginary Friend" is a lot like a Kim Gordon spoken word piece, with the dialogue that Ann Magnuson probably could have come up with. I got sucked in by the cover of this 45, which is a parody of a National Geographic magazine cover, with song titles posing as the names of feature stories. Very original and hard to put a label on - that's good though. It's not at all what I expected from Refect Refect or the Kill Rock Stars label; but that's also a good thing, I guess. Not just another riot-grrrl band, eh? (Kill Rock Stars) Shawn Wernette.

RIPPLE "Stay Inside" b/w "Alex" 7"

This quartet from Long Island, NY is made up of one git, a bass, drums and, get this, a fiddler. An' they ain't even a C&W band! Instead they come across as an indie-pop, Americanized John Foxx-era Ultravox. Heck, the music is almost like a stripped-down Roxy Music. I really dug "Stay Inside." If you find this 7" give it a spin. (Court Square) N. Zebrowski.

SHIVA SPEEDWAY / ENDURO split 7"

Shiva Speedway hail from Cambridge, MA for starters. Their twin guitar (no bass) and drum attack raise this intensely creepy, fuck sludge, that oozes pure Kern-esque SEX! Imagine Kim Gordon with a clue. Tempos have no bounds till it's slashed and burned like my car will be if it doesn't do me right. This is some of the best all-femme rock I've heard in awhile. As for Austin, TX's Enduro just imagine Arto Lindsey (Mars Days) got bit with a scif-fi bug that made him ass-shake until the James Brown's all came home. A pure, relentless mess, with a Moog to twirl your knobs, finger your brain and shave your ass cuz...well, you can take it and like it. A great release. (Uprising) Bryan Ramirez.

SUICIDE MACHINES / HUMBLE GODS split 7'

The Suicide Machines do not impress me. I've got two words for these guys: Mustard Plug. Op Ivy was fun the first time around boys and girls, not the millionth. Why are these people so opposed to doing anything different? Just one song that doesn't sound like the last one? Thanks for trying. How long is the chain on your wallet now? Humble Gods should be humble enough to stop. Just stop. No more Fat Wreck 13-year-old whiny repetitive shit. Well, if you like redundancy, this is all yours. Stay punk, y'all. (Hollywood) mpayok.

THE TRANS MEGETTI ***Rent A Rocket*** **7"**

Mike Reed liked this record so much that he stole it from me. How good would a record have to be to instigate a theft amongst friends? This is one damn good record. 3 rockin' tunes on this platter in the vein of new school melodic H/C. Nothing artsy here. Noisy Gibson guitars, energetic drumming, great vocals. Reminds me of early Drive Like Jehu. These guys really have their endings down, too. There is nothing I detest more than bands who don't know how to end their songs. There is nothing about the Trans Megetti that I detest. Will I ever see this record again? (Art Monk Construction) scott yahtzee.

VIC VACUME & THE ATTACHMENTS / THE OUIJA BOARDS split 7"

This is the most fun that can be packed onto any Punk 7". Not much can be said about this record other than that. These two bands must consume a large quantity of beer each and every day in order to write music this fun. Two songs from each band make this a pretty good deal for a 7". Vic Vacume' does "Outta Control" and "Moo Goo Gai Pan" and the Ouijas do "Sister Mary Bulldog" and "Neck". This most definitely is the most fun I've ever had with a 7". (Semprini) Tim Arnold.

VINNIE AND THE STARDUSTERS ***The Girl from Ipanema Wants to Kill Me*** **7"**

Despite amazing packaging (including 3D glasses, 12 page Archies 3D comic, and big, promising press kit), this release falls flat on it's face. None of the tracks are even remotely humorous. 3 oldies tracks; Walk Around, The Girl from Ipanema, and Que Sera Sera, with moronic lyrical substitution (Que Sera Sera becomes Quesadilla, Walk Around becomes Walk Around Naked). Idiotic and useless. Get this, these nutty fellows wear Hawaiian shirts, can you believe it! The

ViEW

D. Wood's Top Ten Best & Worst Films Of 1996

I've been surprised at how many people have complained that 1996 was a marginal year for films. If you only have the tenacity to search out films playing at our local multiplex, I suppose you would be justified in feeling that way. But with a closer look, 1996 has been solid, with some great films vying for attention. The **Brothers Coen** (**Joel** and **Ethan**) delivered their best film ever this year. Top notch storyteller **John Sayles** gave us his masterwork, a film so well written and textured it defied the Hollywood reputation, and will stand as one of the great films of the decade.

But distribution problems plague the industry, with the Disney-owned Miramax wielding its mighty fist on the indie scene with some good results, but mostly leaving small screens dominated by Miramax product. Sometimes that's good, sometimes that's bad. A perfect example would be the Swedish film directed by **Lars von Trier**, **BREAKING THE WAVES**, which has been playing in the three principal cities for film - New York, Chicago and Los Angeles - since the last two months of 1996, but has yet to make its Michigan debut. Will 1997 see some moderation in the clout Miramax seems to have on the distributors of indie films? We shall see.

Locally, the film scene is serviced nicely by the Main Art Theater in Royal Oak. It's a beautifully refurbished, state-of-the-art, three-screen house that's a bright spot and easily the best place to see some of the most important films. The Star Theaters chain continues to be the best multiplex situation in which to view films; work is underway to open the Star Southfield, which will apparently house the largest number of screens in the state. Lansing continues to be pitifully under served by the AMC chain, whose Meridian 8 outlet is severely run-down. Major repairs to equipment, as well as a basic training course for their very distracted staff, are sorely overdue. The Odeon is the only "theater" that exhibits independent film, and it's one of the nicest closets I've ever seen a movie in. Their consistently "10 to 12 weeks late" booking schedule is maddening. My special award for worst local theater goes to all outlets of the General Cinemas Theater chain. In Lansing, the honor is bestowed upon the GC's Lansing Mall West Theaters. With their brain-dead, prepubescent, ill-informed staff, rotten uncomfortable auditoriums and sub-standard projection and audio equipment, they continue to uphold General Cinemas' promise to make your viewing experience as awful as possible. Avoid this chain at all costs.

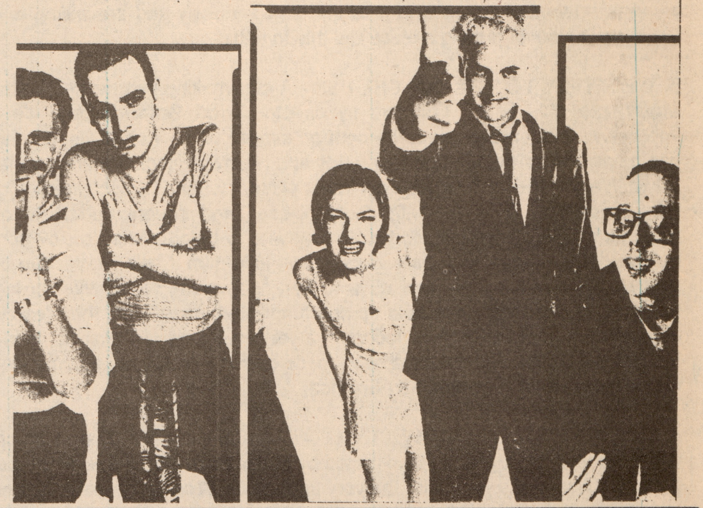
With that said, it's time to discuss the Best Films of 1996. As I mentioned, it's been a great year, so along with the ten best I included a list of several more that didn't quite make the cut, but bear a mention. I, also, spent some time coming up with the ten worst films I sat through this year, and **Tom Arnold's** name came up an amazing THREE times, a record! I would rather watch paint dry than have to watch any of them again. A useful list at the video store - stay away from these films!

THE TEN BEST FILMS OF 1996

10. TRAINSPOTTING
9. LOOKING FOR RICHARD
8. BIG NIGHT
7. SHINE
6. THE ENGLISH PATIENT
5. WELCOME TO THE DOLLHOUSE
4. THE PEOPLE VS. LARRY FLYNT
3. LONE STAR
2. SECRETS AND LIES
1. FARGO

Honorable mentions to: **COLD COMFORT FARM, BEAUTIFUL THING, BOUND, STEALING BEAUTY, 12 MONKEYS, HEAVY, I SHOT ANDY WARHOL, FLIRTING WITH DISASTER, MOTHER.**

10. TRAINSPOTTING - One of the more controversial films of the year because of its realistic approach to drug use. Director **Danny Boyle**, who previously gave us the mostly un-likable **SHALLOW GRAVE**, scored here with the story of a group of disaffected Scottish youth who seem to go round and round with no real purpose in life other than to shoot drugs and pass out. **Ewen McGregor** plays the main protagonist, Renton, with razor-sharp sarcasm and a complete disdain for his fellow mates. In one of the best scenes in the film, Renton explains his disgust with the Scottish as a bunch of "colonized wankers," and "servile pathetic scum ruled over by effete assholes." Full of the self-loathing one might expect, **TRAINSPOTTING** shows us both sides of the addiction coin, with both agonizing scenes of heroin withdrawal, and scenes lovingly depicting the pleasure of intravenous drug use. Watch for one of the most brilliant, realistic, and powerful overdose scenes I've ever seen.



Trainspotting

9. LOOKING FOR RICHARD - In a year stuffed with more Shakespeare that you could shake a stick at, **Al Pacino's** **LOOKING FOR RICHARD** is the best of the bunch. Part documentary, part performance piece, part acting class, this fascinating approach to Richard III is highlighted by Pacino explaining motives and characterizations to fellow actors like **Alec Baldwin**, **Kevin Spacey** and **Winona Ryder**. Though it may seem slow at first, this turns into one of the most intimate, inquisitive looks at Shakespeare asking the question why American audiences are so standoffish about the Bard. Pacino poses the question to random people on the street and one young lady tells him she's recently seen "Hamlet" on Broadway. He excitedly asks her what she thought of the play and she blurts out..."It sucked!"

8. BIG NIGHT - This is just about the best film about food that I've ever seen. That said, **BIG NIGHT** is about much more than the art of cooking. Directed by **Campbell Scott** and **Stanley Tucci**, it's the story of two immigrant brothers who've come to America from Italy to run a classic Italian restaurant. Tucci plays the brother with more business acumen, and **Tony Shaloub** gives a brilliant performance as the other brother, with a heart as deep as the pots of pasta sauce simmering on his stove. He's way ahead of his provincial American customers. Remember, this story is set in the Fifties when American palates were just discovering spaghetti and meatballs and pronouncing it "eye-talian." The depth of the characterizations is breathtaking. So well-written are all the parts, that by the closing dinner party scene you feel you know all the guests and would be welcome at their table. An amazing achievement, and be forewarned that after viewing the film you will have a tremendous desire to cook (or at least eat) something. Get out your garlic press and enjoy.

7. SHINE - The true story of onetime piano prodigy **David Helfgott**, director **Scott Hicks** strikes a nerve with this uneven biopic. Even though the ending is a tad too sugary for my tastes, the performance by **Geoffrey Rush** as the matured Helfgott is one of the year's best. In addition, **Armin-Mueller Stahl** quietly steals the show as Helfgott's tyrannical but loving father. A deep, textured performance allows Stahl to show both sides of his character's nature. We see the way he drives young David, how incredibly oppressive his love for his gifted son is. We see how his desire for his son to be great completely overshadows the boy's other needs. A typical Hollywood film would have relegated this character to the place of a one-sided fire-breathing bad guy, but **SHINE** paints a much more realistic picture. Both are worthy of Oscars in this fascinating story of Helfgott's transition from piano genius to slouched, stuttering, yammering savant.

6. THE ENGLISH PATIENT - **Anthony Minghalla's** vast romantic epic features the best locations of any film all year. He spent four years making this film, and every painstaking second is up there to marvel at. **Ralph**

Finnes **(SCHINDLER'S LIST)** plays the topographer with a yen for his friend's lady, played by **Kristen Scott-Thomas** **(ANGELS AND INSECTS)**. Utilizing painkiller-induced flashbacks, we learn the incredible story of their love affair, and the events that lead to Finnes' horrible disfigurement. One of the best actresses on the planet, **Juliette Binoche**, plays the nurse who cares for him with total compassion and finds a place for herself at the same time. Films like this that attempt to cover such vast amounts of material and do it so well are always a curiosity. It takes a director with a clear vision along with talented actors who take the craft seriously and are willing to do the difficult work of putting a piece like this together.

5. **WELCOME TO THE DOLLHOUSE** - A star-making vehicle for **Heather Matarazzo**, this is the first film by director **Todd Solondz**, and it's an impressive debut managing to be both an expose on how cruel life in school can be as well as being genuinely funny and heartwarming. Matarazzo plays Dawn Weiner, the least popular girl in her class, dubbed "the Weinerdog" by her classmates, complete with goofy glasses and square outfits. In one hilarious scene, Dawn tries to help a boy who is being picked on by some bullies. When they finally walk away, Dawn asks him if he's okay. The boy gets up, in obvious pain, and says to her, "Leave me alone, Weinerdog!" Even though he's just been beat up and humiliated, he still has the presence of mind to hurl an insult at someone on a yet lower rung of the social ladder. Many films on this subject have been made over the years; none come close to this most auspicious debut by Solondz.

4. **THE PEOPLE VS. LARRY FLYNT** - I was taken aback by how much I loved this wild, outrageous film directed by **Milos Forman**. Some of the best performances of the year, with the very underrated **Woody Harrelson** nearly seamless as Hustler publisher Larry Flynt. And in what I hope will lead to an Oscar statue on her mantle, **Courtney Love** plays Flynt's wife, Althea. She electrifies this film from the moment she appears on screen, first meeting Larry as a dancer at his Hustler club. Because of her this film is upped a notch, and I hope she gets noticed for this perfect performance. I've heard a bunch of tight-asses piss and moan about how we should believe in the free speech ideals that the film focuses on, but that Larry Flynt isn't worthy of the effort, that he's somehow a poor candidate to hold up the mantle of free speech. To that I say, "Horseshit!" I remember that Hustler was one of the most radical magazines of the seventies, yeah, strictly hardcore porno, but also some of the most biting political satire this side of the National Lampoon. Why not Larry Flynt? The fact that he was/is a pornographer doesn't disqualify him! Flynt stood up for free speech and showed that if the system could work for him, then it could work for anyone. In addition, the closing credits rock, and made me go dig out my Gary Wright records which are currently at the top of my play list.

3. **LONE STAR** - **John Sayles** is one of the very best American filmmakers, and this awesome piece of work is his best film yet. A complex tale of murder, deceit, race relations and border politics are just some of the elements he chooses to juggle here. As far as pure cinematic storytelling goes, there is none better than Sayles. **LONE STAR** is filled with flashbacks and backstory, a tapestry of characters all woven together with a craftsman's precision. **Kris Kristofferson** is downright scary as the racist sheriff. **Chris Cooper** plays his son who inherited the job, but all resemblance's to his nasty daddy end there. A great ensemble cast features **Frances McDormand**, outstanding newcomer **Matthew McConaughey**, and **Joe Morton** and even **Elizabeth Pena** get the opportunity to shine. **LONE STAR**, written, directed, and produced by Sayles, is thick, rich film-making the likes of which Europeans think Americans are incapable of. Most of the time I'm inclined to agree with them, which is why a picture like **LONE STAR** makes me feel a twinge of remorse.

2. **SECRETS & LIES** - Another jewel in the crown of Brit director **Mike Leigh**, who has a near-perfect track record with landmark achievements like **LIFE IS SWEET** and **NAKED**. Blubbering **Brenda Blethlyn** stars as a mother who has kept a secret from her family and friends for so long that she hasn't thought about it in years. When the daughter she never knew tracks her down, the sparks begin to fly. All of the lies come to a head at a dinner party where the truth is exposed, leaving everyone slack-jawed. Exploring issues of race from both sides of the fence is only one of the themes of this complex, wonderful film. Much like John Sayles, Leigh is an expert at weaving a story around a large cast of very interesting characters. An important work from a great director.

1. **FARGO** - Margie Gunderson is the sheriff in Brainard, Minnesota. Her husband, Norm, is an artist whose specialty is ducks, and he's competing to get his artwork on a stamp. She's quite pregnant, and suddenly she's got a triple homicide to deal with. Joel and Ethan Coen join John Sayles in 1996 each releasing what is their best film yet. Considering the weight those names carry in the film business, this is no small feat. The Coen Brothers are two of the most talented, consistently creative and innovative filmmakers. Together, they're responsible for **BLOOD SIMPLE**, **RAISING ARIZONA**, **MILLER'S CROSSING**, **BARTON FINK** and the under-appreciated **HUDSUCKER PROXY**. Wow, what a list! If all goes as it should, Frances McDormand will win the Best Actress statue for her performance as Margie. Played with gutsy determination, McDormand creates the character from the ground up before our very eyes. Based on a true story, **FARGO** also features the funny-lookin' **Steve Buscemi** and a knockout performance from **William H. Macy** as the spineless Jerry Lundergaard. He's such a sleaze that he's willing to have his wife kidnapped in an ill-fated attempt to cash in on her ransom to cover up his financial woes at work. This is the most original, creative film of the year, at times scary and shocking as well as being a truly black comedy. If you missed its theatrical run, don't worry, **FARGO** is available on video. The very best film of 1996.

THE TEN WORST FILMS OF 1996

10. **FIRST WIVES CLUB** - This movie made a pile of money, but I truly hated watching every obnoxious frame of it. **Bette Midler**, **Goldie Hawn** and **Diane Keaton** star as three former college buddies living rich, wealthy lives in Manhattan. But their perfect lives go sour when the men in their lives all turn out to be shitheels. Taking a cue from Ivana Trump, they decide to empower themselves by getting back at their husbands. Might have been funny, but it's so poorly written and directed that it just fizzles. As for the famous trio of stars, after a few minutes all I saw up on that screen were three over-the-hill paychecks. Bleechhh!!!!!

FIRST WIVES CLUB

9. **CARPOOL** - Would-be comedy about a Dad, played with no effort at all by **David Paymer**, who comes to understand that he needs to spend more time with his kids and that the corporate world isn't as important as he thought it was. When Paymer takes over the carpool one morning, the hilarious hi-jinx begin. For no apparent reason, the bumbling, stumbling **Tom Arnold** kidnaps the whole bunch for a day of wackiness. Whoever thought any of this could possibly be funny is a real numbnuts. Strike one for Mr. Tom "Schizznik" Arnold.

8. **MY FELLOW AMERICANS** - Most critics gave this a pass because it stars Hollywood legends **Jack Lemmon** and **James Garner**. I'm less inclined to give a movie this bad any kind of slack. Evidently, Jack Lemmon was told this was "Grumpy Old Men 3," because he basically uses all the moves he does in those films. The two play ex-Presidents, Garner on the right, Lemmon on the left, who get involved in a secret plot. Wow, what a premise. Lemmon essentially uses the same character he did in the "Grumpy" movies, blowing raspberries and slinging cuss words; what a hoot. In his contract for this film, along with the usual food and hospitality demands, it also stated that the elderly actor be provided with "one box of large, extra absorbent Depends" in his trailer daily. Poot!

7. **BIG BULLY** - **Rick Moranis**, who has not a shred of credibility, stars in this tired comedy devoid of any real purpose. There must have been a better

use for the film stock wasted on this movie. Moranis plays a guy who was picked on by a bully when he was a kid, the bully was played by SURPRISE! Tom Arnold. The two renew their feud as adults when Moranis moves back to his old hometown to accept a job. 1996 was a terrible year for Tom Arnold, and will 1997 be any better with the lamented **McHALE'S NAVY** set to be released after already being in the can for a couple of years (always a bad sign)? Strike two for the guy who actually used to bed down with Blowsanne.

6. **DAYLIGHT** - Our old buddy **Sylvester Stallone** returns with his yearly appearance on this list. **DAYLIGHT** is an obnoxiously loud, cliché-ridden film about the collapse of a tunnel that connects New York City and New Jersey. Stallone, with that ever present speech impediment, volunteers to go into the blocked tunnel and save a helpless group of trapped pedestrians. The real problem with this picture is that you realize soon after Stallone reaches the victims, that you don't care a whit if he saves the group of very annoying characters or not. A complete waste of time.

5. **JINGLE ALL THE WAY** - And a 10 worst list wouldn't be complete without **Ahnold Schvarzaneggeh**. Although he starred in the much better **ERASER** earlier this year, he just couldn't resist making this turkey. Dad is too busy to remember to buy his son the special toy that he wants for Christmas, so on Christmas Eve he goes out and tries to find "Turbo Man" for his brat kid. So filled with crass commercialism, that I swear this film stunk with a stench that seeped out of the screen somewhere. **JINGLE ALL THE WAY** made me say, "Bah humbug!"

4. **HIGH SCHOOL HIGH** - Why anyone thought that the film **DANGEROUS MINDS** needed to be spoofed is beyond me. It was a bad film itself and another bad career move for **Michelle Pfeiffer**. **HIGH SCHOOL HIGH** is a terribly unfunny comedy about a violent inner city school, and in all my years of going to movies, I've never wanted to walk out on a film as much as I did with this bomb. Casting the idiotic **Jon Lovitz** didn't help matters either, ex-***Saturday Night Live*** cast members continue to reek havoc on the film industry. If you doubt that, witness the career flame-out that **Chris Farley** is having. He almost made the list with the awful **BLACK SHEEP** and is currently starring in **BEVERLEY HILLS NINJA**, a sure contender for this list in 1997. Blink and you'll never see him again.

3. **THE STUPIDS** - Directed by the once great **John Landis**, I frankly sat with my mouth hanging open through this one. I couldn't believe what I was seeing on the screen. I couldn't believe what the filmmakers were trying to pass off on the audience as "entertainment." KA-BOOM!!! Strike three for the embarrassing Tom Arnold. Let's all hoist our beer mugs in the hope that he'll never, ever be allowed to make another film. This film is about a family named the "Stupids," with the yammering Arnold playing the father, Stanley Stupid. They're so dumb that it's supposed to be funny, but it never is. Not for one second. Watch for the scene where Stanley goes on **Rolanda Watts** show and sings his way through "I'm My Own Grandpa." (*a classic by the Grand Ol' Opry's Grandpa Jones, ed.*) Incredible. This is the same scene that includes Arnold's newest bride, Detroit's own **Julie Campnella**, in a sleazy display of Hollywood nepotism.

1. **ED** - But as bad as **THE STUPIDS** is, this is even worse. Starring **Matt LeBlanc** from NBC's coffee sitcom, ***Friends***, it's the story of a minor league baseball team that recruits an ape to help their ailing roster. The ape rooms with LeBlanc providing us with lots of "potential comic situations," but none ever materialize in this deadly dull, quietly surreal film. **ED** also stars **Jack Warden**, who must have thought this project had some life, but hopefully this piece of garbage will be rubbed right off his resume. LeBlanc is awful, wooden and unsure of himself playing off one of the worst monkey suits I've seen, even worse than last year's **CONGO**. The monkey belches and passes gas, too. If that sounds funny to you, then run right out and rent it.

FIVE STAR FILMS OF THE MONTH

EJ Hamacher

Once again I am happy to turn my usual column to the unabashed promotion of the Kinotech film series, sponsored by the Art Gallery of Windsor, and now playing films every Monday and Tuesday night at 9:00 PM at the Windsor Film Theater.
The program is briefly as follows:

(For a more detailed description, see Kinotech's own extensive program catalog - available around the Detroit area.)

February 17, 18
THE FACE OF ANOTHER, dir. **Hiroshi Teshigahara**, 1966
Collaboration with novelist **Kobo Abe** involving plastic surgery, sexual infidelity and a condemnation of post-war Japanese culture.

February 24, 25
THE SEVENTH CONTINENT, dir. **Michael Haneke**, 1989
A stern, but perceptive, indictment of the shallowness of European consumer culture as exemplified by the routine life of a well-to-do Australian family.

March 3, 4
SWEET SWEEETBACK'S BADASSSS SONG, dir. **Melvin Van Peebles**, 1971
An all-out attack against dominant whitey culture (and filmmaking) by the original no-nonsense super stud.

March 10, 11
TWO OR THREE THINGS I KNOW ABOUT HER, dir. **Jean-Luc Godard**, 1966
The pinnacle of **Godard's** early work, a collage film that examines prostitution and role-playing playing as metaphors for modern, urban life.

March 17, 18
THE SWIMMER, dir **Frank Perry**, 1968
Meet Ned Merril, a product of the early 60's high-life that is slowly backtracking through his crumbling life by way of neighbors' swimming pools. One of Hollywood's oddest creations.

March 24, 25
TWO-LANE BLACKTOP, dir. **Monte Hellman**, 1971
Key American independent film that uses the coast-to-coast highway to explore the emotional boundaries of disaffected youth.

March 31, April 1
DEATH BY HANGING, dir. **Nagisa Oshima**, 1968
A harsh, expressionistic expose of the criminal nature inherent in most racial and class motivated judicial systems.

April 7, 8
THE ACT OF SEEING, dir. **Stan Brakhage**, six films, 1955-1980
Retrospective selection of this American film poet's explorations into the heart of life and the shadows of death.

April 14, 15
WOYZECK, dir. **Werner Herzog**, 1979
Adapted from the classic German play, the film focuses on a soldier driven to murderous extremes by the incredible repression and regimentation of his life.

April 21, 22
BAD TIMING (A SENSUAL OBSESSION) , dir. **Nicholas Roeg**, 1979
A doomed love affair gets the **Roeg** treatment, a mixture of psychic and physical space that tries to express the emotional aspect of life's insanity.

The State of Detroit Radio, Part 3

Allen Salyer

Out of Mount Clemens comes the news that WDZR is no more. They've changed their format from (what I considered) "heavy metal" to (what I've heard referred to as) "classic rock." They've also changed their call letters to WWBR, "The Bear." Such a treat, another classic rock station playing all the same rock songs. Now I can use all the presets in my car radio and never be bothered with the artistically challenging, the unusual, the different; I am safe and secure in a, um, "contemporary" comformist tradition. Damn strange. My mother grew up listening to and loving Pat Boone covers of "race music" and has since grown in her taste and musical sophistication. It's embarrassing to me that my generation apparently is so large and stagnant and stupid that "more of the same" is still the most attractive marketing trend in existence, and that my mom's generation seems so much more open, thoughtful and sometimes revolutionary when it concerns the arts. Arrrgh!

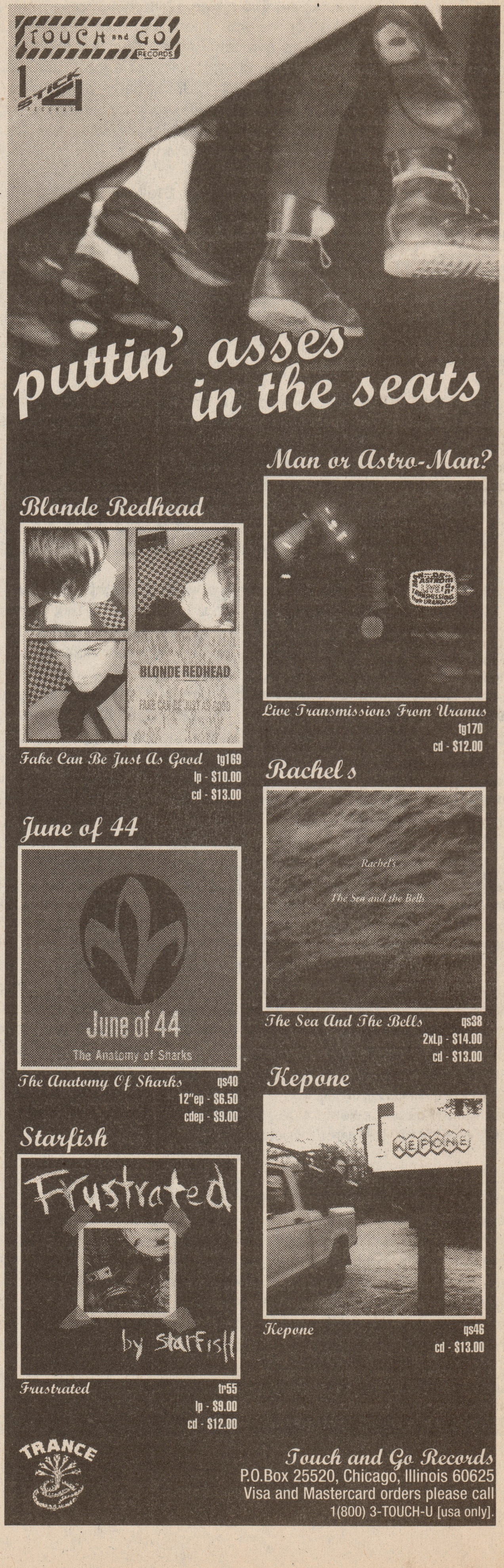
One of the most pathetic features of this programming is that the same old guys (yes, I'm a feminist, but I'm just looking at "classic" rock radio which, being stuck in the top-forty of the early seventies, decided that women, rather than being barefoot and pregnant, would serve the higher purpose of being sex toys, muses and groupies. Heaven forfend that Yoko Ono was something other than the bitchy wife who broke up the Beatles! Hey, I'm just trying to deal with gutless radio on its own terms here,) have pretty extensive catalogs, with a lot of songs that have enough familiar features to be non-threatening yet would give the illusion that you are hearing something new and fresh. It's very strange given the popularity of "new" Beatles material that the programming gurus haven't caught on to the idea of (let's call it) alternative dinosaur rock. Hundreds of albums, thousands of songs, and yet the highly-paid programming geniuses always sell the same old shit. You'd never know that Golden Earring released a dozen great albums, that Deep Purple have two awesome live albums, that Pink Floyd's experimentalism led to imitation and experimentation and influenced many modern rockers or that Rush released anything in the 80s. Instead it's always "Radar Love," "Smoke On The Water," "Money" and "Fly By Night." Better to listen to Bill Shapiro's "Cypress Avenue" program on Sunday afternoons on WDET-FM with his in-depth studies of great rock bands like The Who with alternate tracks, live cuts, and different mixes that you rarely hear on radio. Better to listen to your older sibs or maybe your aunts and uncles or even your grandparents' record catalogs than to leave the driving to local broadcasters.

Ted Nugent coming on board is part of this WDZR-WWBR change. I thought he was terribly out of place in a heavy metal format, now he fits right in. Well, at this juncture, I agree with the WDZR program director who objected to my use of the words "heavy metal" to describe his station's format. It ain't "heavy metal" now. If that fellow is still there, he might now object to my use of the phrase "classic rock" because they manage to occasionally slip in a few modern rock hits, and I bet you can guess which ones.

Quiz: Which Detroit radio station plays Stone Temple Pilots, Alice In Chains, Bush, Soundgarden and Nirvana? Answer: Pretty much all of them: alterna-rock, college-rock, regular-rock, metal-rock, and even so-called classic-rock stations. Their songs are indelibly etched into my lobes. It's to the point where I change the station immediately upon recognition of any of them. It's become un-bear-able.

Here's an experiment you can try: Listen to a "popular" radio station for an hour. Now listen to the same station the next day, only an hour later. Then listen to the station a third day and a further hour later. Notice anything familiar? Yeah, pretty much the same songs in the same order. Many stations seem to have this 25-hour format, a magic playlist that program directors buy from some "expert" developed for Midwestern tastes (as if any of those coastal boys have an ear; market research is the ticket--screw art, brains and taste). I noticed this practice when I changed my job-starting time over the holidays. There also seems to be a 23-hour format, in which you deduct an hour each day instead of adding an hour. I guess this saves the radio station a little bit of money and energy.

Whenever I skim through the radio channels and actually do find something interesting, it's most often a small college or high school radio station. Sadly, since most of my radio listening is relegated to driving time, these are short-lived moments of glee; the station's ranges tend to be limited. I really enjoy these cloudly winter days because the signal range seems to double and triple when the skies are overcast and I'm treated to CJAM's signal (Windsor) all the way to Livonia, and WHFR (Dearborn Heights) reaches Royal Oak, and I can occasionally pick up some Ann Arbor stations. Sometimes, Nirvana is not merely the name of a band--good music can take me to a better place. The 1972 popular top-ten takes me back to the Nixon-Agnew political years. Scary that the most popular rock radio format in existence now seems to celebrate the darkest years in recent historical memory. Life is strange, but the public airwaves are stranger. Now that the so-called public airwaves are being bought out by Rupert Murdock and Disney. I guess it really is "A Small World After All," eh? Think happy thoughts!



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Trip

Parables of Love and Kindness on the Road with AJ Dunning and The Verve Pipe

by Karen Mulhern

My glimpse of AJ Dunning, lead guitarist of The Verve Pipe, was high on a stage at the WCBN River Rave, besieged with audio problems. As the roadies worked to overcome some major sound system bugs, and his band mates hung in a corner, he stood by himself, hands in pockets, eyeing the crowd. They eventually played their set, and from the opening chords of "Drive You Mild," I was hooked. I knew I needed to learn a lot more about this guy from Michigan and his blonde cohorts. America On-line seemed as good a place as any to start my info search.

Enter cyberspace. Http://thevervepipe.com yielded all the tour dates a woman could want. July 20-25, four shows, four venues, in four different directions, but none more than a two hour drive from home. This was definitely doable... Next, I needed an entree to meet the band as a "fan" not a writer. A quick check of AOL's music message space...hmm, no Verve Pipe folder, well let's create one...Within a few days fans like myself were multi-posting about this fabulous band. Why not e-mail management, and tell them about the folder, see what that brings...a post from AJ thanking me for the folder along with his e-mail addy? Hard to believe, but then again this is America, where hard work pays off...I was about to meet the band. Could an interview be far behind?

JULY 20TH - *The Paradise Rock Club*, Boston: I get my first glimpse of the tour bus that would be responsible for 1200 extra miles on my Jeep. WBCN was once again hosting TVP; it was free (translation: crowded). I managed to make my way to first row, stage left, and was not disappointed. The band ripped its way through most of "Villains" and several songs from Pop Smear. The encore of "Strawberry Fields," amazing in its whacked-out energy, ended with Dunning stage-driving into the crowd.

As the audience cleared, I found someone checking names for backstage clearance. I showed him my e-mail, and entered a cramped rectangular room. Being nervous (and yes, a tad tipsy) I spied Dunning sitting on a couch. I did what any true Bostonian would do: leaned over, shook his hand with a rapid-fire, "I liked the show, I liked the show, I liked the show." I told him who I was, "you know, the rabid fan from AOL?" then moved on to meet the Vander Arks. But here I was rescued from foolishness, as another fan passed out face-first at Brian's feet. Remark heard behind me: "In all my years of drinking, I've never seen that happen." I vowed to be more professional the next night.

JULY 21ST - Downstairs at the *Pearl Street Nightclub*, the stage, a triangular wedge less than a foot off the floor. Tonight, I've come to watch AJ. Something about his intensity makes me think he's the one I should interview, and I need to concentrate on him to get a grasp of the questions. With less than a 100 people present, it was easy to claim my spot. Exact same set as the *Paradise* show, but in this most intimate setting, a truly stellar performance. The band was tight; amidst the tribal chanting of "Victoria," it was hard to tell where The Verve Pipe ended and the audience began. Running behind the amps to snap some photos as they finished their set, I decide to keep up my charade for one more day. The band mingles well tonight in the small crowd, happily signing posters, shirts, necks, whatever is presented to them along with a pen. I corner Dunning and tell him I thought tonight's show was most impressive, and that I'll see him in Portland (Maine), two days from now. He thanks me for my interest and I depart.

JULY 23RD - *Granny Killam's Industrial Drinkhouse*, Portland: Armed with my recently developed pictures, and a note to Dunning explaining I'm a writer disguised as a groupie (or is it a groupie disguised as a writer, by now the two have blurred) I enter the bar. Ordering a shot of tequila, I understand *Granny's* definition of "industrial." After two more, I need a bathroom, walking (weaving?) in that direction, who do I see but AJ, blocking the door. We say hello, and I remind him that I want to hear "Reverend Girl," a song that didn't make the previous set lists. He smiles and I move on.

As their set begins, I take my usual spot to the right of the stage. Halfway through, they play my request. He glances my way when they finish and I lean forward to say, "You guys are AWESOME tonight!" He moves his hand in a so-so sort of gesture, far too humble, I think, for someone of such talent. I decide to give him the note and some pictures after the show. Tonight they wrap up the set with a sonic, swirling "Walrus," "Goo Goo Goo Joobing" John Lennon out of his grave. The crowd at *Granny's* went berserk, a perfect ending to an incredible show. Once again, they are besieged by the fans and autograph hounds. I ask Dunning for his pick (for my son) and give him the note. I tell him to read it later, that this is probably my last show, good luck and good-bye. He promises to e-mail me and I move on.

JULY 25TH - Two days later, sitting by the ocean at my summer place, I check my watch for the millionth time. I know they are playing in New Haven (Connecticut) tonight, more than two hours away from my lounge chair. I suddenly understand how addicts feel. At 3:30, realizing my husband will be home within the hour, I jump up, tell my son and his friend I am going home overnight for a dentist appointment (sometimes, you just HAVE to lie), grab a quick overnight bag and a map, and peel-out.

The drive to New Haven is quicker than I expected, I arrive with plenty of time to kill. Wandering the Yale campus, I happen upon *Cutler's*, a CD store of enormous proportions. I look up, over some used vinyl and there he is. He is surprised, but I am mortified. In the light of day he is thin, quiet and serious. His eyes are soft but intense; having caught me off guard, I blush miserably. I asked him if he's read my note, he asks what I am going to write about. I apologize for being somewhat duplicitous, and assure him I wasn't following him around. We speak more of the type of story I am trying to do, a road review from a fan's perspective. Assuring me that the whole thing is "cool" we move on to other topics, and both relax.

The show at *Toad's Place* that night was "all ages," but essentially a clone of *Granny's*; same set list, "Walrus," the works. As the crowd leaves the bar, I notice Dunning standing alone on the sidewalk near the tour bus. I catch his eye and grab my opportunity. Amidst the small talk, I tell him "I'll refer to you as a 'guitar god' when I write my article." Now it's his turn to blush, saying "nothing could be further from the truth!" We share a smoke and a laugh and he volunteers to be interviewed, telling me to send my questions via e-mail and that he will do the same with the replies.

As the days go by and I await his responses, I learn a lot about The Verve Pipe from other cyberfans. There is Scott Minder of Michigan, who recounts waiting hours in subfreezing conditions to see them in Michigan bars at least 20 times and feeling every minute was worth it; Sandy from Los Angeles, who followed them from LA to San Juan Capistrano, because **Brian Vander Ark** was one of the best live vocalists she'd ever heard; **Brian Warkoczeski of New Rock 97.9 (WGRD)**, recalling 1200 fans singing along to "The Freshmen" in Grand Rapids' ***Orbit Room*** as an eerie sight, a sentiment echoed by several other Michiganders known only to me by their screen names. But my favorite story of all came from Daisy in Kalamazoo, who was at their first performance ***Club Soda*** when they covered "Kung Fu Fighting." She has been following them for years and has seen them too many times to count. Such is the dedication of The Verve Pipe's fans.

But the question remains. What inspires this kind of loyalty? I spoke by phone with **Dave Deaver**, owner of ***The Intersection***, a modern rock club in Grand Rapids, where The Verve Pipe often played. He spoke glowingly of their work ethic, their ability to work hard, long hours, hump their own gear and enjoy their fans. When I asked him specifically about Dunning's contribution to the band, he replied, "**Brian Stout** (original guitarist) may have been responsible for giving the band its name, but AJ's artistic flair and chemistry propelled them to the national level." He described him as the quiet Verve Piper, one who would always remember and support the East Lansing / Grand Rapids music scenes, no matter his fame or status. He felt he'd be unlikely to ever think of himself as a star.

Shortly after my conversation with Deaver, AJ's responses came in and, at first glance, it seems that Deaver is right. **AJ Dunning** is first and foremost a musician, who has played every type of gig imaginable: Top 40, R&B, dance, country, originals. He spoke of being a boy in Lansing, watching "Hee Haw" with his grandfather and being wholly impressed by **Roy Clark** on guitar, and then being a young teen and realizing guitar players seem to attract the girls (I wonder if he realizes they still do?). When asked about life on the road, he said if it weren't for his laptop he'd probably be insane by now, that he listens to all types of music and lots of it, naps when he can, and tries to eat right (he recently gave up red meat, much to the horror of his German ancestors). This is clearly a man who's successes have not gone to his head.

Of particular interest to me at the shows were his well-loved, worn guitars - the kind that beg to tell you a story. The most beat up one, he recounts, was given to him by a high school friend who's brother had gone away to a Baptist college, returned home, decided the guitar was evil and had to get it out of the house. When Dunning picked up his friend, to take her to a high school event, she said she had something for him. "Well, my jaw dropped," he said. "And, as they say, the rest is history."

And what a history it's been since high school. He met **Donny Brown** (drummer) back in 1987 when he joined a band that Brown happened to be leaving. They became friendly and stayed in touch, while AJ was living in Cincinnati and Atlanta working with various bands. Donny called him in 1992 and asked him to audition with The Verve Pipe, but it took a while for them to start working together. Their first gig was on April 12, 1993, playing an afternoon frat type thing in Kalamazoo before opening for the **Gin Blossoms** later that evening.

I asked him what it's like backstage, moments before they go on, and he says he never gets nervous, just anxious to play. Sometimes they'll pass a bottle of Jack Daniels, hang out and crack jokes. Afterwards, he says, he likes to grab a beer, and a towel for his head, shower and go out and socialize with fans. He insists that there is no threat to his privacy, because he travels with the brothers Vander Ark, who get the bulk of female attention. He thinks he typically goes unnoticed (not so) which is fine by him.

There is one thing that will never go unnoticed if you stand in front of AJ Dunning at a show, and that is the way he literally "speaks" through his guitar. He plays with "feel" and seems to be in touch with the spirit within. He told me, "No one's really had to tell me who I am...I've always known...:" and if it's possible to disappear while playing, he does so, transcending himself as only those with strong identities can do. In the process, he brings us all along for the ride, which is the essence of The Verve Pipe, the reason the fans keep coming back for more.

READ

UNDERGROUND SOUNDZ #7

I received that Death Row X-mas disc days before the holiday. Basically, I haven't penned a review for it and, also, it pretty much sucks. But that's the "on the surface rap" for you. The escape plan from the popular biz is this Michigan-based rap / hip-hop magazine that digs deeper than just about anything out there. Great interviews (Pharcyde, Onyx, Luniz), an intense selection of reviews on stuff impossible to find, but they guide the way to acquiring some of the stuff. Good writing and incredibly impressive with a very professional end result. -- *Bryan Ramirez.*

(Underground Soundz 12034 Ridge Highway Tecumseh, MI 49286)

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More unconsidered, unreflected, fifth-rate, half-written "poetry," collected in, and inflicted on us from, Ann Arbor, Michigan; the spiritual home of all true poets.

Actually, half-written is too generous. I had almost called these pieces the embryos of poems, but that's too advanced. What we have here are the seeds and eggs of poems, yet to be united. Am I suggesting these poets engage in sexual congress? It couldn't hurt. And then at least the self-indulgence would stay in the bedroom between consenting adults. -- *Scott Joyner.*

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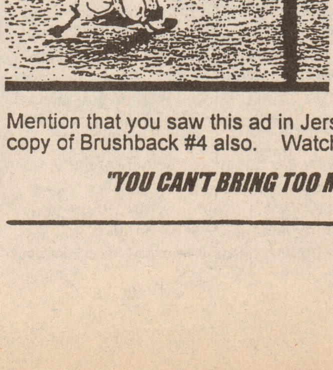
"A strangely unique publication, lacking the typical cut-and-paste filler of lesser zines... lengthy interviews, crisp full-sized photos, and thick glossy pages, with not a single advertisement to be seen."--Etch fanzine (MI)
"Creature Did and Rev. Norb are interviewed, with the usual acidic reviews and opinions. I can't help laughing, which means either he's really funny, I'm just as cynical as he is, or I'm losing my mind a lot quicker than anyone."--Chairs Missing fanzine (CT)

BRUSHBACK



BRUSHBACK #5
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52 pages featuring interviews with Chixdiggit, Paul Lukas of Beer Frame zine, and local CT bands Nevertheless, Explodee, and Farmertan (because our scene ***kicks ass***). Edition of 200, includes Explodee/Nevertheless split 45 with picture sleeve. $6 by 1st Class mail (cash or money order only please).

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Mention that you saw this ad in Jersey Beat when you order and I'll include a copy of Brushback #4 also. Watch for more Sidearm Records stuff in '97.

"YOU CAN'T BRING TOO MUCH AMMO TO A GUNFIGHT"

NEWS

LYCIA will be on tour from April-June of 97. There will likely be dates in the fall as well. **Projekt** is planning a festival which will include bands on their label as well as bands distributed by **darkwave**. The tentative dates are July 25-26. There will be events and industry events the day before and after (with shows on all four days). Fans can direct inquiries to question@projekt.com or to **Darkwave Festival** PO Box 166155, Chicago, IL 60616...

Mixx Music Conference '97. The official date for the Mixx Magazine Music Conference and Sonalysts Indie Showcase is June 7th. It will be an all day event, held on the 70 acre recording and media facility in Waterford, CT. It may start as early as 9 am and will continue 'til at least midnight! Planned are many informative panel discussions, Q&A's, a possible national act performance and lots of performance slots all over Sonalysts' awesome, college campus-like facility for all the hot regional acts that want to play! The Indie Showcase, which will feature even better prizes than last year which included 16 hours of recording time at PowerStation New England, a $2000 Ovation guitar and a music video! Just wait for this year's prizes!!! It will take place in their brand new, 5 million dollar sound-stage!!! A special extra large version of the Mixx Neon Girls will be on hand to act as hostesses. These twelve attractive and personable young ladies will be our ambassadors, making all the attendees feel at home on the Sonalysts campus. They will, also, be guiding the tours of Sonalysts, which features 7 buildings, and includes the authorized, exact replica of Tony Bongiovi's famous PowerStation Recording Studio, and the "world's quietest room," as featured in the Guiness Book. You'll see the editing suites where the soundtrack of *Hunt For Red October* was done, and the Computer Animation suite where many recognizable characters came to life, like the dragon in *Dragonheart*. The full set where C. Everett Koop filmed the *Time / Life Medical Video* series may even still be up! Vendor's want tables in the original sound-stage area for $125 per table! There is a motel next door and Sonalysts is literally next to I-95. The motel will be offering special rates as part of a package deal to attendees.

POWERFACE fans can now reach the band via the Internet. The band's e-mail address is powrface@sojourn.com. They promise they'll write back.

Detroit's **MENTAL LANDSCAPE** went into the studio in December to record the follow-up to their last release, ***Psychic Prostitution***.

THE TOADIES have a new guitar player, Clark Ezekiel Vogeler. Vogeler was previously in an outfit called the **Funland Band**.

March Records told us that they'll be releasing an EP and LP by **KLEENEX GIRL WONDER** later in the year, as well as a comp. entitled ***Pop Romantique***.

Cavity Search Records in Portland, OR will be re-releasing **RICHMOND FONTAINE's** CD, ***Safety***, this February. (See review in the Hear section, ed.)

Repeat The Beat's (and **ETCH** contributor) Willy Wilson will be hosting the Motor City Garage Fest 1997 tentatively set for May 1st, 2nd and 3rd at Detroit's Magic Stick. A very impressive roster is shaping up, so keep your eyes peeled for details...

The new issue of **Asterism** will be coming out in late January/early February. This edition will feature interviews with three of the composers who write the music for the *Star Trek* TV series. Jay Chattaway, Ron Jones and Dennis McCarthy have scored over 350 episodes (and counting) of the current ST shows, plus Dennis did the music for the film *Star Trek: Generations*. There also is a possibility of a surprise artist interview (the details are still being ironed out, which is why the issue may not come out until early February). Plus, of course, the usual gaggle of CD reviews, live reviews, and even a book review.

Hello Chicago folks... **American Gothic Production's** presents *Noir*...Chicago's new Gothic night held at Smart Bar 3730 N Clark St Chicago (773)-549-0203. Every Tuesday scary lady Sarah and **ARCANTA's** own Brother Tom spin dark, beautiful music....drink specials 21 and over $2 cover...There will be giveaways from Projekt / Relic in the future as well as from other associated labels... call **American Gothic Prod**. at 773-ART-GOTH...

Century Media News: **STUCK MOJO** just completed touring Europe supporting **LIFE OF AGONY** and recent **Century Media** signees **GURD**, opening from mid-November through December, followed by a jaunt of UK dates. Their North American campaign begins in February co-headlining with **24-7 SPYZ...SAMAEL** recently wrapped up a six week European tour with **ROTTING CHRIST** and **MOONSPELL ...GRAVE** recorded the second gig of their recent North American tour (in Corona, CA) for an upcoming Grave "Best Of - Live" album that will be released next spring. The tour saw the band play: (A) someone's backyard due to a club closure; (B) in their underwear at one gig; and (C) a gay bar for the final night of the tour (unbeknownst to them)...**TIAMAT** have re-entered Woodhouse Studios. Expect a spring release for ***A Deeper Kind of Slumber***...

Crusty ol' p-rock vets **THE EXPLOITED** and **G.B.H.** are gearing up for spring time tour of the U.S. Oi! Oi! Ugh!!!...

Roadrunner Info: Look for new releases later this winter/spring by the following: **SHOOTYZ GROOVE** (***Hip-ocracy***), **SEPULTURA, OBITUARY** (***Back From the Dead***), **LEADFOOT** (***Bring It On***), **FEAR FACTORY** (***Remanufacture***) and **BLUE MOUNTAIN**...

Fearless Records is planning spring releases as well: **DEAD LAZLO'S PLACE (Chu*ck*)** LP, and **DRUNK IN PUBLIC** (***Big Wig***) LP.

Q Division's POUNDCAKE and **March Records' HOLIDAY** have both called it a career...

Victory Records will be opening their new record store, **Bulldog Records**, on February 22nd. The new store is located at 1420 N. Milwaukee in Chicago's Wicker Park.

Trance Syndicate / Emperor Jones are planning spring/summer releases by **THE MOUNTAIN GOATS** (***Full Force Galesberg***), **MY DAD IS DEAD, the american analog set, FURRY THINGS, HALF JAPANESE** (***Heaven Sent***), **THE MONROE MUSTANG** and a split 7' **STARS OF THE LID/THE AZUSA PLANE.**

Michael Kroll will release a new LP on **Ng Records** in late May.

On Thursday, January 16th, the Bellingham, Washington warwhouse which housed **Estrus** mail order inventory and **Estrus** archives burned to the ground. The building was a total loss. All color vinyl and other items sold through the ***Estrus Quarterly*** were destroyed in the fire, so mail order will be temporarily closed. They are hoping to be up and running within six mionths. The majority of their regular inventory is stored at their distributor's warehouse in California and is unaffected. The business offices and computer data files were also unaffected by the fire, but they'll be closed temporarily as well. If anyone had a pending order, they will either issue you a refund, a credit voucher or return your order unopened. Crust Club and Estrus Quarterly mailings will be delayed.

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SATURDAY MARCH 15TH

OBLIVION THE MIGRAINES MT. TAI

FRIDAY MARCH 21ST

MOTOR DOLLS TRASH BRATS

SATURDAY MARCH 22ND

THE VOLEBEATS THE CLUTTERS

FRIDAY MARCH 28TH

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Earth Crisis Downset Coal Chamber St. Andrews Hall Detroit
Trash Brats The Lovemasters Gold Dollar Bar Detroit
Erotic Poetry Festival Alvin's
The Atomic Fireballs Magic Stick
Speedball Feisty Cadavers Cross Street Station Ypsilanti
Slim! Jupiter Room Pontiac
Grin Paycheck's Hamtramck
RFD Boys The Ark Ann Arbor
Shoemakers Fudge Gun Burnt Toast Minefield Hopskotch Sinister Skank Local 432 Flint
Ekoostik Hookah The Intersection
Red Red Meat Reptile House G.R.
Tonic Chalk Farm Double Door
Roomful Of Blues Chicago Blue Note
Dah Veed Diablo Sol MC Overlord Trees Dallas

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 15TH

Thornetta Dacvis Blue Rags Magic Stick Detroit
Only A Mother Fez Gold Dollar Bar
Fathers of the Id Alvin's Detroit
Thornetta Davis Magic Stick Detroit
Feisty Cadavers Flux Broadzilla The Mosquito Club Westland
Junior Wells Magic Bag Ferndale
Barbara Cohen The Ark Ann Arbor
Native Styles de~fy~ent 1's The Underground / Christ Lutheran Church Lansing
Metallica Corrosion Of Conformity Van Andel Arena Grand Rapids
Cletus Oblivion Fireside Bowl
Earth Crisis Downset Coal Chamber Cabaret Metro Chicago
Pavement Double Door Chicago
Clutch Pantera Neurosis Fair Park Coliseum Dallas
Brave Combo Little Jack Melody Trees Dallas
Critters Buggin Gibson's Tempe

SUNDAY FEBRUARY 16TH

500 Ft Of Pipe Gold Dollar Bar
Foxy Brown Warehouse Detroit
Roomful Of Blues Czar's St. Joseph
Cannibal Corpse Brutal Truth Immolation Main Event Toledo, OH
silverchair Handsome Vic Theatre
Morphine Angel Needulhed Thurston's Chicago
Empire Hideous and the Brickbats Metro Chicago
Solas Abbey Chicago

MONDAY FEBRUARY 17TH

Tonic Chalk Farm Reptile House
Brutal Truth Cannibal Corpse Immolation The Main Event Toledo
Roomful Of Blues Buddy Guy's Legends Chicago
Good Riddance Screw 32 The Nile Theater Mesa

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 18TH

silverchair Handsome St. Andrew's
Monkey Chuck Sluggo's Allendale
Pavement Lounge Ax Chicago
The Mighty Blue Kings Green Hill
Stigma Ultra 7 Trees Dallas

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 19TH

Cibo Matto Pulsars Shelter Detroit
Tonic Chalk Farm St. Andrew's Hall
Amy Rigby The Ark Ann Arbor
They Might Be Giants Pease Auditorium Ypsilanti
El Scorcho Matty Girl Eunice Trees
Better Than Ezra Caravan Of Dreams
The Queers Screw 32 The Nile Theater Mesa

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 20TH

Hoarse Watershed The Palladium
Roomful Of Blues Magic Bag
Buckwheat Zydeco 7th House
Tarika Sammy The Ark Ann Arbor
Karate The Sorts Joan Of Arc Mineral Fireside Bowl Chicago
Tool Melvins Trees Dallas

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 21ST

Wilco Majestic Theatre Detroit
Tracy Science Gold Dollar Saloon .
Buckwheat Zydeco Blind Pig A2
I Hate Mars Heidelberg Ann Arbor
Monkey Chuck The Halfway Inn A2
Grin Intersection Grand Rapids
Cibo Matto Pulsars Metro Chicago
Twist Offs Cubby Bear Chicago

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 22ND

Metallica Corrosion Of Conformity The Palace of Auburn Hills
I Hate Mars Pharoah's Golden Cup
Penny-Ante Band Gold Dollar Bar
Keb' Mo' Band Johnny Lang 7th House Pontiac
dt's Cross St. Ypsilanti
The Monistat 7 Absence Local 432
The Rev. Horton Heat NY Loose Metro Chicago
Poi Dog Pondering La Borsa Chi.
Sebadoh Those Bastard Souls Evergreen The Vic Theatre Chicago
Throat Singers Of Tuva Old Town School Chicago
Ugly Mustard Stinkbug Nocturne Huge Peter Trees Dallas

SUNDAY FEBRUARY 23RD

Metallica Corrosion Of Conformity The Palace of Auburn Hills
Baked Potato Gold Dollar Bar
Twist Offs Fallout Shelter Gd. Rapids
Sublime Riviera Theatre Chicago

MONDAY FEBRUARY 24TH

Wilco Main Event Toledo
The Presidents Of The United States Of America Bomb Factory Dallas
Sebadoh Galaxy Club Dallas

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 25TH

Throat Singers Of Tuva The Ark
Pachinko Whit's End Toledo
Nil8 Impala Ft. Worth

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 26TH

Robert Noll The Mission Oxbow Lake Roadhouse Waterford, MI
The Inbreds Terradactyl Lounge Windsor, Ontario
Monkey Chuck Alibi Big Rapids
Ivison Skewee G Roadside Poets Trees Dallas
Nil8 Orbit Room Dallas

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 27TH

Pachinko Overthrow The Old Miami
Baaba Maal Majestic Theater Detroit
19 Wheels Rick's East Lansing
Strap The Soup Birch County Trees

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 28TH

True Stories Quartet Speaking In Tongues Gold Dollar Bar Detroit
Jonathan Richman Blind Pig A2
Mystery Beat So-Kuraama Pale Grey Sky Primary Process Melange Local 432 Flint
dt's Rick's East Lansing
Grin Intersection Grand Rapids
Monkey Chuck Club Soda Kalamazoo
The Rev. Horton Heat NY Loose The Rave Milwaukee
Tablet Pluto Radish Trees Dallas
BLACKstreet Keith Sweat Reunion Arena Dallas

SATURDAY MARCH 1ST

Rev. Horton Heat NY Loose Skeleton Key St. Andrew's Detroit
Waco Brothers Robbie Fulks The Volebeats The Magic Stick Detroit
William Topley Magic Bag Ferndale
Phork Structure The Underground / Christ Lutheran Church Lansing
Disengage Capacity Suburban Delinquents Spit Local 432 Flint
dt's Club Soda Kalamazoo
Old 97's Peter Schmidt The Calways Trees Dallas
Pimpadelic Club Clearview Dallas
Thrall The Orbit Room Dallas
Solas N. Texas Irish Festival Dallas

SUNDAY MARCH 2ND

Solas N. Texas Irish Festival Dallas

MONDAY MARCH 3RD

Cibo Matto Pulsars Gibson's Tempe

TUESDAY MARCH 4TH

Tool Melvins Wings Stadium K-zoo

WEDNESDAY MARCH 5TH

Sister Machine Gun Drain S.T.H. Shelter Detroit
Red Red Meat Jeremy Enigk Galaxy

THURSDAY MARCH 6TH

Smokin' Joe Kubek Band (featuring Bnois King) Fifth Avenue Royal Oak
Skeleton Key Frankie's Toledo
Thrall Whit's End Toledo

FRIDAY MARCH 7TH

The Business Warzone The Shelter
Ashley MacIsaac St. Andrew's Hall
Nick Juno Guilty Bystanders F.O.C.
Fudge Gun Local 432 Flint
Skeleton Key Empty Bottle Chicago

SATURDAY MARCH 8TH

D.J. Sppoky Ben Neill St. Andrew's Hall Detroit
Thrall Gold Dollar Detroit
The Stevens Family Lincoln High School Warren, MI
Social Scare Face Full Of Nails Square One Parka Kings Local 432
The Rev. Horton Heat Trees Dallas

SUNDAY MARCH 9TH

Elevator To Hell Terradactyl Lounge

MONDAY MARCH 10TH

Counting Crows Engine 88 Aragon Ballroom Chicago

TUESDAY MARCH 11TH

Sheryl Crow Fox Theatre Detroit
Counting Crows Engine 88 Aragon Ballroom Chicago

WEDNESDAY MARCH 12TH

Red Red Meat Jremy Enigk Magic Stick Detroit
Sheryl Crow Park West Chicago
Shades Apart Deep Ellum Live

THURSDAY MARCH 13TH

Counting Crows Engine 88 State Theatre Detroit
Sheryl Crow Riviera Theatre Chicago

FRIDAY MARCH 14TH

Counting Crows Engine 88 State Theatre Detroit
Donovan Royal Oak Theatre - MI
The Cardigans Red Red Meat Jeremy Enigk Metro Chicago

SATURDAY MARCH 15TH

The Cardigans Papas Fritas The Shelter Detroit
Grin Paycheck's Hamtramck
Counting Crows Engine 88 Wings Stadium Kalamazoo
Six Finger Satellite Double Door
Susan Werner Schuba's Chicago
The Mighty Blue Kings The Orbit Room Dallas

SUNDAY MARCH 16TH

The Queers New Bomb Turks Screw 32 The Shelter Detroit
Susan Werner The Ark Ann Arbor
Donovan Park West Chicago
Skeleton Key Cows Galaxy Dallas
Sparkler Rehab Lounge Dallas

THURSDAY MARCH 20TH

Shawn Colvin Freedy Johnson Patti Griffin Royal Oak Music Theatre dt's Union St. Traverse City, MI

FRIDAY MARCH 21ST

The Cranes Rasputina St, Andrew's Hall Detroit
dt's Westtown Bay City, MI
Monkey Chuck Highlander Standale
Cows Emptyu Bottle Chicago

SATURDAY MARCH 22ND

The Presidents of the United States of America St. Andrew's Hall Detroit
MU330 Animal Chin The Shelter
dt's Westtown Bay City, MI
Shawn Colvin Freedy Johnson Patti Griffin Chicago Theater
Low Dirty Three Double Door
The Cranes Rasputina Metro
Gene Loves Jezebel Nile Theater
Smokin' Joe Kubek Band (featuring Bnois King) Blue Cat Blues Dallas

SUNDAY MARCH 23RD

Low The Dirty Three 7th House

MONDAY MARCH 24TH

Zap Mama Orchestra Hall Chicago

TUESDAY MARCH 25TH

Zap Mama Warriner Hall Arena Mt. Pleasant, MI
The Presidents of the United States of America Metro Chicago

WEDNESDAY MARCH 26TH

The Presidents of the United States of America Metro Chicago

FRIDAY MARCH 28TH

Servotron Magic Stick Detroit
dt's Back Room Flint
The Mighty Blue Kings Chicago Blue Note Chicago

SATURDAY MARCH 29TH

The Mighty Blue King Metro Chicago
Servotron Lounge Ax Chicago

WEDNESDAY APRIL 9TH

The Mighty Blue Kings Asylum
The Cranes Rasputina Gibson's

THURSDAY APRIL 10TH

Shades Apart Electric Ballroom

TUESDAY APRIL 15TH

Lycia Reptile House Grand Rapids

RELEASE DATES

FEBRUARY 14TH

The Delgados *Domestiques* (March)
Takako Minekawa *Roomic Cube* (March)
V/A *Violent World: A Tribute to the Misfits* (Caroline)

FEBRUARY 18TH

Attrition *Eternity EP* (Projekt)
Evil Mothers *Spider Sex and Carwrecks* (Invisible)
I Hate Mars *Rosemary Flakes* (IHM)
Leechwoman *33 Degrees* (Invisible)
Lunachicks *Pretty Ugly* (Go Kart)
not breathing *sangre azul* (Invisible)
Steve Roach / Vidna Obmana *Cavern of Sirens* (Projekt)
Scorn *Zander* (Invisible)
Vidna Obmana *Twilight of Perception* (Relic)
V/A *Drug Test #1* (Invisible)

FEBRUARY 25TH

Bennet *Super Natural* (Roadrunner)
Blixa Bergeld, Nick Cave & Mick Harvey *To Have And To Hold: Motion Picture Soundtrack* (Mute)
Lori Carson *Everything I Touch Runs Wild* (Restless)
Fun^Da^Mental *GODdevil* (Beggar's Banquet)
The Lyres *Early Years* (Crypt)
My Own Victim *No Voice, No Rights, No Freedom* (Century Media)
Mike Oldfield *Voyager* (Reprise)
Panasonic *Kulma* (Mute)
Parasites *Hang Up* (Lookout!)
Pinhead Gunpowder *Goodbye Ellston Avenue* (Lookout!)
Pizzicato Five *Combinasion Spaciale* (Matador)
Revelators *We Told You Not to Cross Us* (Crypt)
Run On *No Way* (Matador)
Sentenced *Down* (Century Media)
Squirtgun *Another Sunny Afternoon* (Lookout!)
30 Amp Fuse *Saturday Night At The Atomic Speedway* (Dedicated)
V/A *KCRW: Rare On Air, Vol. 3* (Mammoth)

MARCH 4TH

Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds *The Boatman's Call* (Reprise)

MARCH 5TH

Camber *Beautiful Charade* (Deep Elm)

MARCH 11TH

Rory Block *Gone Woman Blues: The Country Blues Collection* (Rounder)
Blonde Redhead *Fake Can Be Just As Good* (Touch & Go)
The Boys of the Lough *Good Friends - Good Music* (Philo)
Consuelo-Jon Quintet *Last Sunday Morning* (Accurate)
Crown Heights *More Pricks Than Kicks* (American)
Garrison Fewell & Laszlo Gardony *Reflection of a Clear Moon* (Accurate)
The Hang Ups *So We Go* (Clean)
The Heptones *Sea of Love* (Heartbeat)
Chris Isaak *Baja Sessions* (Reprise) (video)
Jade Bridge *Ambush on All Sides* (Henry Street)
Kepone s/t (Quarterstick)
Jimmy Lafave *Road Novel* (Bohemia Beat)
Natalie MacMaster *Fit as a Fiddle* (Rounder)
Natalie MacMaster *No Boundaries* (Rounder)
The Stuart Martz Band *Threesome Reel* (Atomic Theory)
John McCutcheon *Sprout Wings and Fly* (Rounder)
Pete Morton *Courage, Love and Grace* (Flying Fish)
R.L. Burnside *Mr. Wizard* (Fat Possum / Epitaph)
Jumpin' Johnny Sansone *Crescent City Moon* (Bullseye Blues)
Shonen Knife *Brand New Knife* (Big Deal)
Slush *North Hollywood* (Discovery)
Starfish *Frustrated* (Trance Syndicate)
Super Chikan *Blues Come Home To Roost* (Rooster Blues)
Barry & Holly Tashian *Harmony* (Rounder)
Trouble Funk *Early Singles* (IZ)
Robert "Bilbo" Walker *Promised Land* (Rooster Blues)
Smokey Wilson *The Man from Mars* (Bullseye Blues)
V/A *Steel Rails: Roots of Americana, Volume 1* (Rounder)
V/A *Merengue: Dominican Music and Dominican Identity* (Rounder)

MARCH 15TH

Snapcase *Progression Through Unlearning* (Victory)

MARCH 18TH

Attrition *Étude* (Projekt)
Carl, You Know Peggy s/t (Crustacean)
Paradise Lost *Lost Paradise* (Fierce)
Paradise Lost *Gothic* (Fierce)
Joe Lynn Turner *Nothing Changes* (Mayhem)
Withstand *And Anger is a Warm Place to Hide* (Fierce)

MARCH 25TH

Bantam Rooster *Deal Me In* (Crypt)
Bettie Serveert *Dust Bunnies* (Matador)
Circle Jerks *Group Sex* (Epitaph / Frontier) (re-issue)
Circle Jerks *Wild In The Streets* (Epitaph / Frontier) (re-issue)
Harry Pussy s/t (Silt Breeze)
Alison Krauss & Union Station *So Long So Wrong* (Rounder)
Machine Head *The More Things Change...* (Roadrunner)
Gary Numan *Premier Hits* (Beggar's Banquet)
Old Man's Child *Born Of The Flickening* (Century Media)
Paingod s/t (Century Media)
Palace *Lost Blues* (Drag City)
They Might Be Giants *Then: The Early Years* (Restless)
Unleashed *Eastern Blood* (Century Media)
V/A *Silt Breeze Singles Compilation* (Silt Breeze)

MARCH 30TH

Cast Iron Hike *Watch It Burn* (Victory)

APRIL 1ST

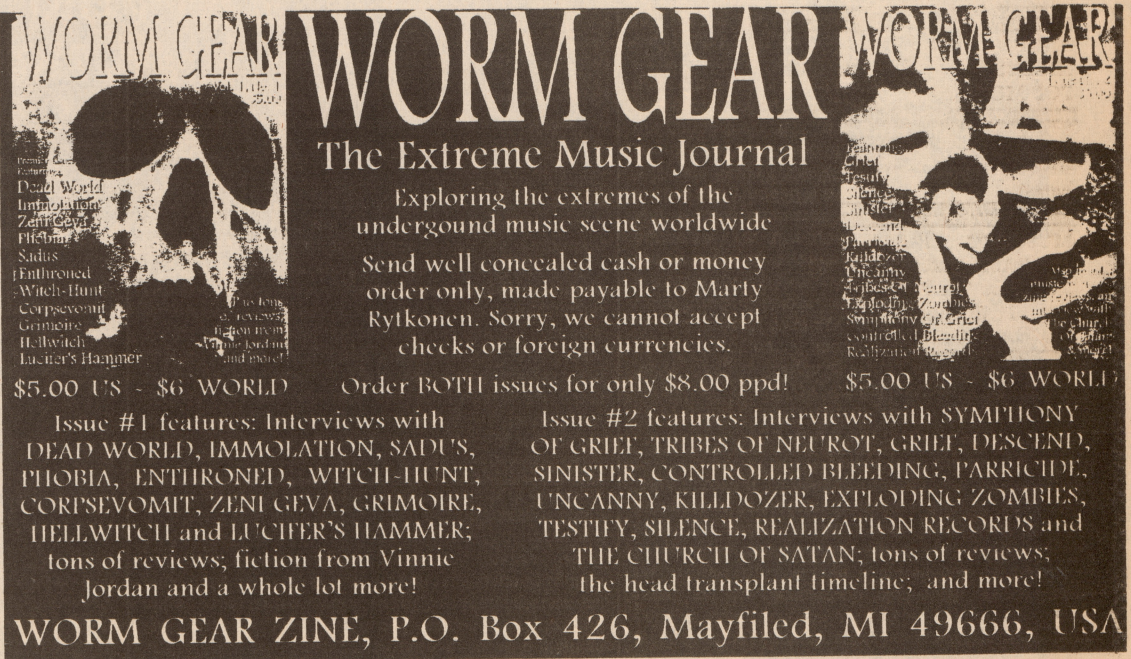
Fall From Grace *s/t* (Fierce)

APRIL 8TH

Attrition *Death House* (Relic)
Attrition *At The Fiftieth Gate* (Relic)
Bela Fleck *Double Time* (Rounder)
Alex Francis MacKay (Alastair Aonghais, MacAoidh) *A Lifelong Home (An Dachaidh Dha Mo Shaoghal)* (Rounder)
Beres Hammond *Getting Stronger* (Heartbeat)
The Khac Chi Ensemble *Moonlight in Vietnam* (Henry Street)
Jo-El Sonnier *Cajun Pride* (Rounder)

APRIL 22

the american analog set "magnificent seventies" b/w "waking up is hard to do" 7" (Emperor Jones)
V/A The Alan Lomax Collection Sampler (Rounder)
V/A Volume 1: Voices from the American South (Rounder)
V/A Volume 2: Ballads and Breakdowns (Rounder)
V/A Volume 3: 61 Highway Mississippi (Rounder)
V/A Volume 4: Brethren, We Meet Again (Rounder)
V/A Volume 5: Bad Man Ballads (Rounder)
V/A *Volume 6: Sheep, Sheep, Don'tcha Know The Road?* (Rounder)



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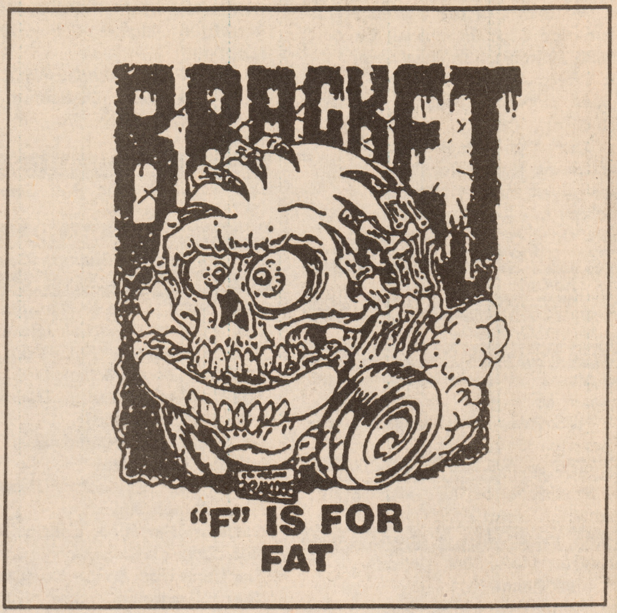
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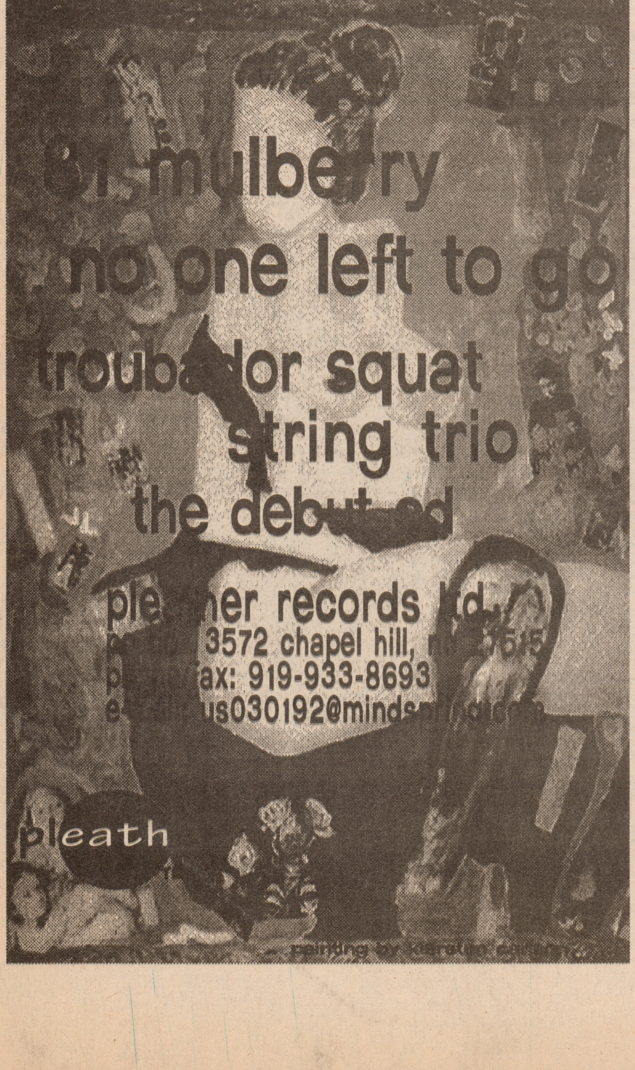

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